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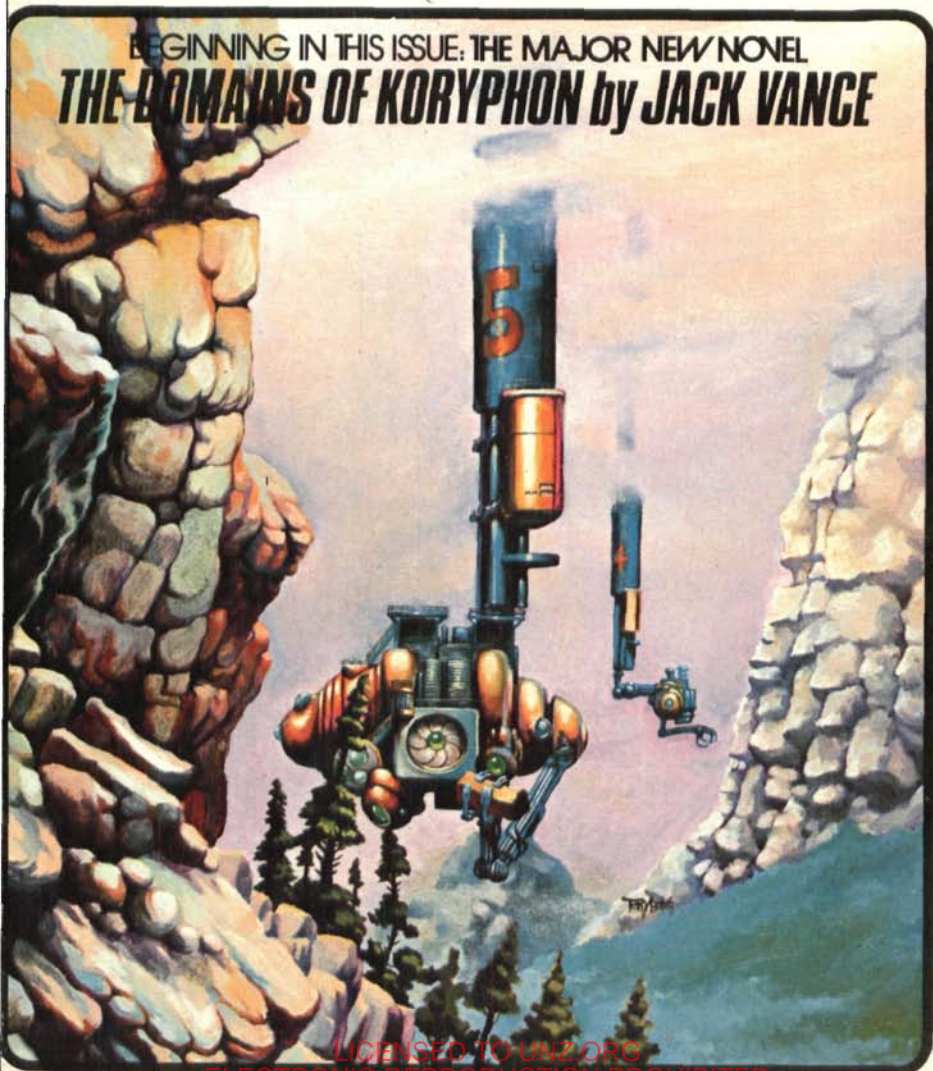
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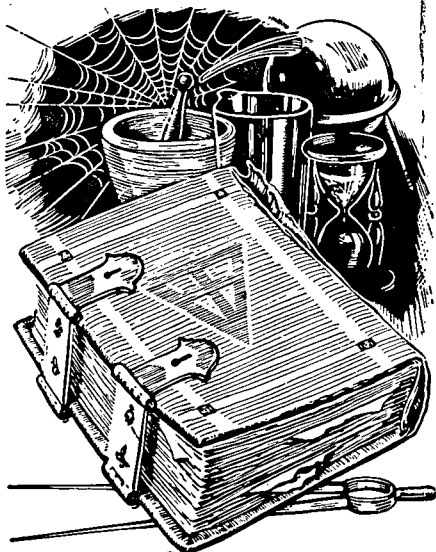
First in Science Fiction Since 1926

BEGINNING IN THIS ISSUE: THE MAJOR NEW NOVEL
THE DOMAINS OF KORYPHON by JACK VANCE



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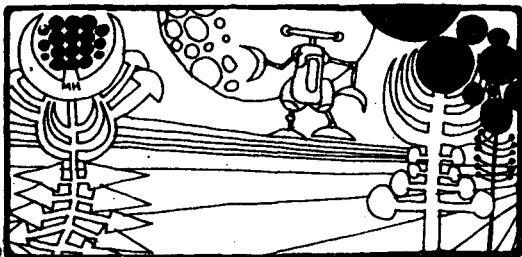
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



REACTIONS: When the April issue of this magazine came out I was prepared for a variety of reactions to my editorial on the energy crisis. I was sure someone would want to know why I was getting a lower gas-mileage from the restricted speed limits, but no one asked. (The answer has to do with the gearing of a Volkswagon—the fact that top gear is in fact an ‘overdrive’ gear, and that below 40 mph I must drive in a lower gear—which requires no less than 25% more engine revolutions per mile travelled.) Likewise, I was certain that at least one reader would point out that Congress did *not* vote “dictatorial ‘emergency powers’” to Mr. Nixon after all, and, as it happened, the national speed limit was set at 55 instead of 50, shortly after the editorial was written. But no one pointed out these facts.

Instead, I received the following letter from Mr. Allen Kerr:

Dear Mr. White:

I have just received the April 1974 issue of **AMAZING SF**, and feel that certain comments are in order.

As one of those who help pay your salary by buying the publication you edit, I feel that I have a right to expect science fiction, or an approximation of it, within the pages of the magazine. I object quite violently to your use of five pages to present your

political opinions on a subject completely unrelated to what I paid for. If I want such editorials, I can read *Newsweek* or the *Washington Post*, which specialize in such type articles and do it much better.

My second objection is the inclusion of the noxious effluents by Malzberg. While good taste may have gone out of style, surely some redeeming feature should take its place, and I have never found such in anything which he has written.

I enjoyed your books; I have several of them in my library. I do not enjoy your editing. Why not return to what you do best?

With all best wishes for your future as a writer, I am,

Yours sincerely,
Allen Kerr

PERIODICALLY over the years I’ve received letters not unlike Mr. Kerr’s, and periodically I use this space to review my reasons for the editorial subjects I choose to write about. Obviously, the time is here again.

And yet Mr. Kerr has picked an unusual editorial to complain about. If the “energy crisis” is “completely unrelated” to science fiction, it’s news to me. This “crisis” is symptomatic the growing seriousness of the shortage of resources we shall be facing in the next century. It is something which few Americans were willing to

(cont. on page 127)

I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM



It was the computer's revenge. In rage, in frenzy, he turned us into monstrosities, imprisoning us deep inside his endless banks. Now I am a great soft jelly thing.

I have no mouth. And I must scream.

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Jack Vance last appeared in these pages with the novel, "Trullion: Alastor 2262" (March & June, 1973); the novel which follows is set in the same universe, but in another sector—the world of Koryphon, populated by divers humans and two native races of quasi-intelligence. Once again Vance evokes the rich smells and sights of an alien world and transmuted customs, while covert battles rage over—

THE DOMAINS OF KORYPHON

JACK VANCE

(First of Two Parts)

Illustrated by MICHAEL NALLY

Introduction

THE SPACE AGE is thirty thousand years old. Men have moved from star to star in search of wealth and glory; the Gaean Reach encompasses a perceptible fraction of the galaxy. Trade routes thread space like capillaries in living tissue; thousands of worlds have been colonized, each different from every other, each working its specific change upon those men who live there. Never has the human race been less homogenous.

The outward surge has been anything but regular or even. Men have come and gone in waves and fluctuations, responding to wars, to religious impetus, to compulsions totally mysterious.

The world Koryphon is typical only in the diversity of its inhabitants. On the continent Uaia, the Uldras inhabit that wide band along the southern littoral known as the Alouan, while to the north the Wind-runners sail their two- and three-masted wagons across the Palqa plateau. Both are restless nomadic peoples; in almost every other respect they differ. South across the Persimmon Sea the equatorial continent Szintarre is inhabited by a cosmopolitan population of Outkers*, distinguished from both Uldras and Wind-runners by several orders of sociological magnitude.

*Outker: The general term for tourists, visitors, recent immigrants: essentially all persons other than Uldra or Wind-runner.



Considered indigenous to Koryphon are a pair of quasi-intelligent races: the erjins and the morphotes. The Wind-runners domesticate and offer for sale erjins of a particularly massive and docile variety, or perhaps they breed and train ordinary erjins to such characteristics. The Wind-runners are secretive in this regard, inasmuch as the trade provides them wheels, bearings and rigging for their wind-wagons. Certain Uldras of the Alouan capture, mount and ride wild erjins, controlling their ferocity with electric curbs. Both domesticated and wild erjins have telepathic capacity, by which they communicate with each other and with a few Wind-runner adepts. Unrelated to the erjins are the morphotes, a malicious, perverse and unpredictable race, esteemed only for their weird beauty. At Olanje on Szintarre the Outkers have gone so far as to form morphote-viewing clubs, a recreation all the more titillating for the macabre habits of the morphotes.

Two hundred years ago a group of off-planet free-booters dropped down upon Uaia, surprised and captured a conclave of Uldra chieftains and compelled cession of title to certain tribal lands: the notorious Submission Treaties. In such a fashion each member of the company acquired a vast tract ranging from twenty thousand to sixty thousand square miles. In due course these tracts became the great 'domains' of the Alouan,

upon which the 'land-barons' and their descendants lived large and expansive lives in mansions built on a scale to match the holdings.

The tribes signatory to the Submission Treaties found their lives affected to no great extent: if anything, improved. The new dams, ponds and canals provided dependable sources of water; inter-tribal warfare was proscribed and the domain clinics provided at least a modicum of medical care. A few Uldras attended domain schools and trained to become clerks, storekeepers and domestic servants; others took jobs as ranch-hands.

In spite of such improvement, many Uldras resented the simple fact of inferior status. On a subconscious and unacknowledged level but perhaps a source of equal exacerbation was the land-barons' disinclination for the Uldra females. A certain amount of rape or seduction, while resented, might have been accepted as a sordid but inevitable adjunct to the conquest. In point of fact, while the Uldra men, with their tall nervous physiques, gray skins dyed ultramarine blue and aquiline features, were in general personable, the same could not be said for the women. The girls, squat and fat, with their scalps shaved bald against the onslaught of vermin, lacked charm. As they matured, they retained their heavy hips and short legs, but elongated their torsos, arms and faces. The typically long Uldra nose became

a drooping icicle; the gray skins became muddy; the hair, vermin or not, was allowed to grow into a heavy orange nimbus. Toward these Uldra girls and women the Outker land-barons* maintained a scrupulously correct indifference, which eventually, by a paradoxical reverse-effect, came to be regarded by the Uldras as a humiliation and an insult.

South across the Persimmon Sea lay the long narrow island Szintarre and its pleasant capitol Olanje, a fashionable resort for out-worlders. These folk, sophisticated, urbane, articulate, had little in common with the land-barons whom they regarded as pompous martinets, without style, grace or humor.

At Olanje is an eccentric old edifice known as Holrude House sat Koryphon's single organ of government: the Mull, a council of thirteen notables. The Mull's charter asserted control across Szintarre and Uaia alike, but in practice it avoided any interest in Uaian affairs. The land-barons considered the Mull an organ for the production of inconsequential sophistry; the Treaty Uldras were apathetic; the Retent Uldras rejected even the theory of cen-

tralized authority; the Wind-runners were ignorant of the Mull's very existence.

The cosmopolitan population of Olanje generated for itself an almost hyperactive intellectualism. Social activity was incessant; committees and societies existed to accomodate almost any special interest: a yacht club; several artists' associations; the Morphote-Watchers; the Szintarre Hussade Association; the Library of Gaean Musical Archives; an association to sponsor the annual fête: Parilia; a college of the dramatic arts; Dionys: the organization dedicated to hyperaesthesia. Other groups were philanthropic or altruistic, such as the Ecological Foundation, which enjoined the importation of alien flora and fauna, no matter how economically useful or aesthetically gratifying. The Redemptionist Alliance crusaded against the Submission Treaties; they advocated dissolution of the Uaian domains and return of the lands to the Treaty tribes. The Society for the Emancipation of the Erjin, or SEE, asserted that erjins were intelligent beings and might not legally be enslaved. The SEE was possibly the most controversial organization of Olanje, inasmuch as an increasing number of erjins was being imported from the Palga for domestic service, farm labor, garbage pick-up and the like. Other less disputatious groups sponsored education and employment for

*No satisfactory equivalent for the word *eng'sharatz* (literally: the revered master of a large domain) exists. 'Baron' or 'lord' implies a formal aristocracy; a 'squire' is master of a small property; 'rancher' implies emphasis upon agricultural activity. 'Land-baron' is awkward and somewhat labored but is perhaps closer to the sense of *eng'sharatz* than any other term.

Uldras immigrant to Szintarre from Uaia. These Uldras, derived in about equal proportion from Retent and Treaty tribes, tended to excoriate the land-barons. Often their grievances were real; often they complained from sheer petulance. The Redemptionists sometimes brought Uldra immigrants before the Mull, the better to prod that often discursive, airy, didactic and capricious group into action. With practiced skill the Mull fended off such importunities or appointed a study commission, which invariably reported the Treaty lands to be havens of peace compared to the Retent, where the independent tribes conducted feuds, raids, assassinations, retaliations, outrages, massacres, atrocities and ambushes. The Redemptionists declared such considerations to be irrelevant. The Treaty tribes, so they pointed out, had been deprived of their ancestral lands through violence and deceit. The perpetuation of such a condition was intolerable, nor could the passage of two hundred years legitimize an originally wrongful situation. Most residents of Szintarre tended generally to endorse the Redemptionist doctrine.

Chapter 1

IN THE FOYER at the Olange space port Schaine Madduc and her brother Kelse examined each other with affectionate curiosity.

Schaine had expected changes in Kelse; changes there were indeed—five year's worth and more. She had left him a bed-ridden cripple, pallid and desperate; he now seemed strong and well, if a trifle gaunt. His artificial leg carried him with only the suggestion of a limp; he worked his left arm as capably as he did his right, although he disdained simulated flesh and kept the metal hand encased in a black glove. He had grown taller: this she had expected, but not the change in his face which had lengthened and hardened and taken on an acerb refinement. His cheekbones had become prominent; his jaw was a jut; his eyes were narrow, and he had acquired a habit of glancing sidewise in a wary, or suspicious, or challenging, squint: a signal, thought Schaine, of the true changes in Kelse: the alteration from a trusting generous boy to this austere man who looked ten years older than his age.

Kelse had been reflecting along similar lines. "You're different," he said. "Somehow I was expecting the merry, frivolous, silly old Schaine."

"Both of us are different."

Kelse glanced contemptuously down at his arm and leg. "Quite a bit different. You never saw these before."

"Are they easy to use?"

Kelse shrugged. "The left hand is stronger than the right. I can crack nuts in my fingers and do all sorts of interesting jobs. Other-

wise I'm much the same."

Schaine could not restrain the question: "Have I changed so very much?"

Kelse looked at her dubiously. "Well, you're five years older. You're not quite so skinny. Your clothes are very nice; you look quite smart. You always were pretty, even as a ragtag tomboy."

"Ragtag tomboy indeed!" Shaine's voice was soft with melancholy. As they walked across the depot memories and images flooded her mind. The girl they spoke about was distant by not five but by five hundred years; she had inhabited a different world, where evil and woe were unknown. The verities were simple and obvious to all. Morningswake Manor was no more and no less than the center of the universe; each of those who lived there had predestined roles to fulfill. Uther Madduc was the font of authority. His decisions, sometimes benign, sometimes mysterious, sometimes awful, were as definite as the motion of the sun. Concentric to Uther Madduc had been herself and Kelse; in an orbit less stable, sometimes near, sometimes far, was Muffin. In general the roles were uncomplicated, except again in the case of Muffin whose status was often ambiguous. Schaine had been the 'ragtag tomboy', nonetheless charming and pretty—so much went without saying—just as Kelse had always been proud and handsome and Muffin always

dashing and brave and gay. Such attributes were implicit in the very fabric of existence, just as the sun Methuen was unalterably pink and the sky immutably ultramarine. Looking back across the years she saw herself against a backdrop of Morningswake: a girl of medium height, neither tall nor short, engagingly lanky but durable, as if she were good at swimming and running and climbing, which of course she had been and still was. Her skin shone tawny-gold from the sunlight; her dark hair was a loose curly tangle. She was the girl with the sweet wide mouth and the alert marveling expression, as if each successive instant brought some new wonder. She had loved with innocence and hated without calculation; she had been mercurial, gentle with small creatures, quick with gleeful gibes. . . . Now she was five years older and five years wiser, or so she hoped.

Kelse and Schaine walked out into soft Szintarre morning. The air smelled as Schaine remembered: fragrant with the essence of leaves and flowers. Down from the dark green juba trees hung strands of scarlet blossoms; sunlight seeped through the foliage to spatter patterns of pink and black on Kharanotis Avenue.

"We're staying at the Seascape," Kelse told her. "There's a party at Aunt Val's this afternoon, ostensibly to welcome you home. We could have stayed at Mirasol, of course, but. . . ." His voice

trailed off. Schaine recalled that Kelse had never been overfond of their Aunt Val. He asked: "Shall I call a cab?"

"Let's walk. Everything looks so beautiful. I've been cooped up aboard the *Niamatic* for a week." She drew a deep breath. "It's wonderful to be back. I feel like I'm home already."

Kelse gave a sour grunt. "Why did you wait so long?"

"Oh—various reasons." Schaine made a flippant gesture. "Obstinacy. Willfulness. Father."

"You're still obstinate and willful—so I presume. Father is still Father. If you think he's changed, you're in for a shock."

"I'm under no illusions. Someone has to give in, and I can do it as easily as anyone. Tell me about Father. What has he been doing?"

Kelse considered before answering: a trait Schaine could not recall from five years ago. Kelse's youth had passed all too swiftly, she thought. "Father is by and large the same. Since you've been gone there's been a lot of new pressure, and—well, you've heard of the Redemptionist Alliance."

"I suppose so. I don't remember much about it."

"It's a society based here in Olanje. They want us to tear up the Submission Treaties and leave Uaia. Nothing new, of course; but now it's a fashionable cause, and in the 'Gray Prince', as he calls himself, they have a fashionable figure-head."

"'Gray Prince'? Who is he?"

Kelse's mouth twitched in a crooked grin. "Well—he's a young Uldra, a Garganche, with some education; he's voluble, quaint and vivacious—in fact, he's the darling of all Olanje. No doubt he'll be at Aunt Val's party this evening."

They passed an expanse of blue-green sward, extending from the avenue up the slope to a tall mansion with five gables, towers to right and left, a façade of mustard-yellow tiles relieved by slabs of glossy black skeel: a structure conceived in eclectic caprice, yet impressive by virtue of sheer size and a certain careless magnificence. This was Holrude House, seat of the Mull. Kelse gave his head a gloomy shake. "The Recemptionists are up there now, trying to indoctrinate the Mull. . . I speak figuratively of course. I don't know that they're in Holrude at this specific instant. Father is pessimistic; he thinks the Mull will eventually issue an edict against us. I got a letter from him this morning." He reached into his pocket. "No, I left it at the hotel. He's planning to meet us at Galigong."

Schaine asked in perplexity: "Why Galigong? He could meet us as easily here."

"He won't come to Olanje. I don't think he wants to see Aunt Valtrina; she might make him come to a party. That's what she did last year."

"It wouldn't hurt him. Aunt

Val's parties were always fun. At least I liked them."

"Gerd Jemasze is coming with us; in fact we flew here in his Apex, and he'll take us across to Galigong.

Schaine made a sour face; she had never liked Gerd Jemasze, whom she considered surly.

A pair of columns marked the entrance to the Seascape. Schaine and Kelse rode a slideway down the vestibule. Kelse arranged for the transfer of Schaine's luggage from the space-port, then they sauntered out upon the terrace close beside the Persimmon Sea and refreshed themselves with goblets of pale green cloudberry juice, glinting with ice-crystals. Schaine said: "Tell me what's been happening at Morningswake."

"Ordinary routine for the most part. We stocked Fairy Lake with a new mix of fish. I went prospecting south of the Burrens and found an ancient kachemba*."

"Did you go in?"

Kelse shook his head. "Those places give me cold chills. I told Kurgech about it; he said it was probably Jirwantian."

"Jirwantian?"

"They occupied south Morningswake for five hundred years, before the Hunge annihilated them. Then the Aos drove out the Hunge.

"How are all the Aos? Is

*Kachemba: a secret Uldra cult-place, dedicated to divination and sorcery, usually located in a cave.

Zamina still matriarch?"

"Yes, she's still alive. Last week they shifted camp into Dead Rat Gulch. Kurgech dropped by the manor and I told him you were coming home. He said you'd get in less trouble on Tanquil."

"Wretched old creature! What did he mean by that?"

"I don't believe he meant anything. He was merely 'tasting the future'."

Schaine sipped the fruit juice and looked out over the sea. "Kurgech is a mountebank. He can't foresee or draw fates or cold-eye or transmit thoughts any better than I can."

"Not true. Kergech has some amazing skills. . . and Ao or not, he's Father's closest friend."

Schaine snorted. "Father is too much of a tyrant to be good friends with anyone—most especially an Ao."

Kelse gave his head a sad shake. "You just don't understand him. You never have."

"I understand him as well as you do."

"That may well be true. He's a hard man to know. Kurgech provides him exactly the right kind of companionship."

Schaine snorted again. "He's undemanding, loyal and knows his place—like a dog."

"Absolutely wrong. Kurgech is an Uldra, Father is an Outker. Neither wants it any different."

With an extravagant flourish Schaine drained the goblet. "I certainly don't intend to debate

anything whatever with either you or Father." She rose to her feet. "Let's walk over to the river. Is the morphote fence still up?"

"So far as I know. I haven't been here since you left for Tanquil."

"A melancholy occasion which I'd just as soon forget. Let's go find a twelve spine devil-chaser with triple fans and a purple lattice*."

A hundred yards along the beach a path led inland to the swamp at the mouth of the Viridian River, and ended beside a tall fence of steel mesh. A sigh read:

CAUTION

Morphotes are dangerous and cunning! Consider *none* of their proffers; accept *none* of their gifts! Morphotes come to this fence with a single purpose in mind: to mutilate, insult, or frighten those Gaeans who come to view them.

TAKE WARNING

Morphotes have injured many persons;
they may kill YOU.

NEVERTHELESS, WANTON
MOLESTATION OF THE
MORPHOTES IS

ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN.

*Morphote viewing is a sport on many levels. The morphotes stimulate upon themselves all manner of growths: spines, webs, wens, fans, prongs, to make themselves objects of fantastic splendor. Morphote viewers have contrived an elaborate nomenclature to define the elements of their sport.

Kelse said, "A month ago some tourists from Alcide came to view morphotes. While the mother and father joked with a beautiful red-ringed bottle-head at the fence, another tied a butterfly on a string and lured away the three-year old child. When Mama and Daddy looked around, Baby was gone."

"Disgusting beasts. There should be controls on morphote viewing."

"I think the Mull is considering along those lines."

Ten minutes passed and no morphotes came up from the swamp to make horrifying proposals. Schaine and Kelse returned to the hotel, descended to the submarine restaurant and lunched on a ragout of crayfish, pepper-pods and wild onion, with a salad of chilled cress and flat-bread baked from the flour of wild brown ferris. Luminous blue-green space surrounded them; at their very elbows swam, grew or drifted the flora and fauna of the Persimmon Sea: white eels and electric blue scissor-fish darting through the thickets of water-weed; schools of blood-red spark-fish, green serpents, yellow twitters, twinkling and darting, the myriads occasionally sifting through each other in a pointillist confusion, finally to emerge as before. On three occasions purple and silver spangs, ten feet of prongs, barbs, hooks and fangs, came to grind against the crystal in an attempt to seize one of the folk who lunched in

the half-light; once the dire bulk of a black matador slid past; once off in the distance appeared the jerking form of a swimming morpote.

A man two or three years older than Kelse approached the table. "Hello, Schaine."

"Hello, Gerd." Schaine's greeting was cool; all her life she had disliked Gerd Jemasze, for reasons she could never quite define to herself. His conduct was reserved, his manner polite, his features undistinguished: blunt at the cheekbones, flat in the cheeks, with short thick black hair above a low broad forehead. His clothes—a dark gray blouse and blue trousers—seemed, in the context of Olanje where everyone wore gay colors and exaggerated fashions, almost ostentatiously severe. Schaine suddenly understood why he repelled her: he totally lacked the idiosyncracies and easy little vices which endowed all her other acquaintances with charm. Gerd Jemasze's physique was not noticeably large nor heavy, but when he moved, the clothes tightened to the twist of his muscles; in just such a fashion, thought Schaine, did his quiet appearance mask an innate arrogance. She knew why her father and Kelse liked Gerd Jemasze; he outdid them both in rigidity and resistance to change; his opinions, once formed, became impervious as stone.

Gerd Jemasze took a seat at their table. Schaine asked po-

litely, "And how goes life at Suaniset?"

"Very quietly."

"Nothing ever happens out in the domains," said Kelse.

Schaine looked from one to the other. "You two are teasing me."

Gerd Jemasze displayed a twitch of a smile. "Not altogether. Whatever happens usually goes on out of sight."

"What's happening out of sight, then?"

"Well—wittols¹ out of the Re-tent have been skulking through the domains talking coalition of all Uldras under the Gray Prince, presumably to chase us into the sea. There's been a lot of sky-shark² attacks on air-traffic—just last week Ariel Farlock of Carmione was shot down."

"For a fact there's a strange mood over Uaia," said Kelse somberly. "Everybody feels it."

"Even Father," said Schaine, "rejoicing over his wonderful

¹Wittols: One of every thousand Uldras is born albino, eunuchoid, short of stature and round-headed. These are the wittols, treated with a mixture of repugnance, contempt and superstitious awe. They are credited with competence at small magic and witchcraft; occasionally they deal in spells, curses and potions. Major magic remains the prerogative of the tribal warlocks. The wittols bury dead, torture captives and serve as emissaries between tribes. They move with safety across the Alouan, since no Uldra warrior would either deign or dare to kill a wittol.

²Shy-shark: A crude one-man aircraft, little more than a flying plank fitted with a gun or some other weapon, used by Uldra nobles for attacks upon enemy tribes or duels among themselves.

joke. Have you any idea what he finds so funny?"

"I don't even know what you're talking about," said Gerd Jemasze.

"I had a letter from Father," Kelse explained. "I told you that he'd gone up on the Palga. Well, the trip seems to have exceeded his expectations." Kelse brought forth the letter and read: "I've had some remarkable adventures and I have a wonderful story to tell you, a most wonderful joke, a most prodigious and extraordinary joke, which has put ten years on my life." Kelse skipped down across a line or two. "Then he says: I'll meet you at Galigong. I don't dare come to Olanje, which would mean suffering through one of Valtrina's awful parties, complete with all the pussy-footers, logic-choppers, aesthetes, four-flushers, sybarites and sycophants in Szintarre. Make sure Gerd comes back to Morningswake with us; he, no less than you, will appreciate this situation, and express to Schaine my great pleasure at having her home once again. . . There's more along this line but that's the gist of it."

"Very mysterious," said Gerd Jemasze.

"Yes, that's how I feel. What is there up on the Palga to cause Father such merriment? He's not famous for his humor."

"Well—tomorrow we'll know." Gerd rose to his feet. "If you'll excuse me, I have a few errands to do." He bowed with rather

cursory politeness to Schaine.

Kelse asked: "You're coming to the party at Aunt Valtrina's?"

Gerd Jemasze shook his head. "It's not really my kind of affair."

"Oh come along," said Kelse.

"You might have a chance to meet the Gray Prince—among other local notables."

Gerd Jemasze reflected a moment or two as if Kelse had scored a point in a profound and complicated argument. "Very well. I'll come. What time and where?"

"Four o'clock at Villa Mirasol."

Chapter 2

THE ROAD to Villa Mirasol, departing Kharanotis Avenue, wound back and forth up the side of Panorama Mountain under stands of gonaive, native teak, langtang and mace. Passing under an arch, the road circled a wide lawn and ended at the villa: an elegant construction of glass, fluted posts, white walls, a roof of many angles and levels, designed in a light and easy spirit of rococo decadence.

Valtrina Darabesq, maternal great-aunt to Schaine and Kelse, welcomed both with an enthusiasm none-the less real for its impersonal facility. Schaine had always marveled at her energy and her remarkable gregariousness; Kelse considered her a bit over-stylish, though he could not help but approve her expansive

(cont. on page 81)

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SEARCHING THE RUINS

ROBERT THURSTON

Robert Thurston's stories are always sharply-wrought, sometimes overlaid with humor ("Up Against the Wall," August, 1973) and sometimes bitterly ironic ("Soundtrack: The Making of a Thoroughbred," FANTASTIC, May, 1974). This time he tells a story about morés in contemporary America, but implies, between the lines, something quite extraordinary . . .

Illustrated by HOWARD CHAYKIN

THE BARBECUE was just beginning to fulfill its potential when the man arrived. He was first seen by Bill Dodson who at the time was edging Dina Flanders toward an orange bedroom door. *Strange type for one of Arnie's parties*, Dodson thought. He stopped to examine the intruder more closely, but he promptly forgot the man as Dina Flanders growled, tugged at his belt, and nodded toward the orange door.

The man spoiled the look of the party. He was unusually sullen-looking. A brow crossed with trenches, a mouth whose corners seemed to be pulled down by the force of a private gravity, slouching shoulders. His clothes—dull, soiled, out of style—clashed with the flowing abstract expressionism of the guests' attire.

Phil Perrine, busy watching his beautiful wife communicate in provocative body language and apparent codewords with half the men at the party, noticed the man only because they collided in the

sunken middle of the living room. Perrine said, "Scuse." The man said nothing, stumbled sideways, sneered at Perrine haughtily—the way the Titanic might have sneered at the iceberg—and walked away. *Crazy Arnie*, Perrine thought, *always inviting some nut for contrast*. In the next moment he was gripped by a sudden panic as he realized that, in the interval of the collision, his wife had managed to flee his scrutiny.

Out on the patio, the crowd was so densely packed that dance experience was required to twist, sidestep, and hipswing to get through the mob unharmed. The man seemed momentarily afraid. Someone beyond the first rank hollered, "Hey, Freddie, ain't seen you since—where you been since—" but it was never ascertained to whom the shout was directed or who had done the shouting. The man edged along the glassed patio wall—a bit desperately, as if he urgently needed to

reach the point where the imitation-stone wall began. At the solid wall he took a deep breath, then raised the transistorized bullhorn he'd been carrying to his lips.

"OKAY, MIDDLE CLASS REACTIONARY SLOBS!"

His amplified voice shook some of the glasses set down on the metal orange patio tables. An instant of shocked silence was followed by a wave of whispered questions. A couple of the brawnier men took a positive step forward.

"SHUT UP!"

Everything stopped.

The man took a long look at the mystified crowd. He may have smiled, though the gravity never quite released its hold on the downward curves of his mouth.

"YOU STUPID BASTARDS!"

Another buzz of querulous whispering.

"SHUT UP, I SAID!"

If silence could be complete, this was it.

The man shook his head. Something like a chortle, amplified, indicated disgust.

"DUMB FUCKERS, YOU DESERVE THIS!"

He dropped the bullhorn. With his other hand he raised a pistol to his head, pointed the barrel into his mouth, and—without a hesitation—pulled the trigger. As he fell heavily to the orange-speckled patio floor, the crowd maintained its silence, like a movie audience when somebody



other than you-know-who gets killed; until Rhoda Klenner, at first fascinated by the pieces of the man clinging to the imitation-stone wall, screamed.

THE CHIEF INSPECTOR—a thirtyish, young exec type—was growing weary of the interrogation's monotony. He asked each of the guests if they'd ever seen the dead man before, and they all answered that they had not. It seemed too pat. Somebody, maybe all the guests in a quickly agreed-upon conspiracy, must be holding something back.

The only break in the routine came when he interviewed the host's longhaired teenage son, who said:

"What the hell do you care, pig?"

The inspector smiled.

"Proud," he began, then felt a pang of fright as he realized that he'd forgotten the rest of the formula. He improvised: "Intelligent. Gutsy."

"Perverted. Impotent. Gamy."

He could not let the little punk get away with it, not in front of all these suburbanites.

"Praiseworthy. Industrious. Gentlemanly."

"Platitudinous. Imbecilic. Grabassers."

"Peacekeepers. Indomitable. Groovy."

At the last word the inspector smiled and winked at the crowd. The young man looked a little

sick.

"Pimps. Idiotic. Gruesome."

The argument continued, with observers shifting their heads in unison, as if at a tennis game. The match ended with the inspector saying, "Peppy. Irish. Give-em-hellers."—at which most of the audience groaned. However, the young man shrugged and gave up the contest. While it appeared as if he had won, the inspector could not avoid feeling the aftermath of a draw.

Annoyed, he addressed the crowd:

"Something smells here and it ain't overripe fish."

"It's pigs," whispered an adolescent voice behind him.

"We're going to get to the bottom of this, and nobody leaves the premises until we do!"

PHIL PERRINE could not find his wife. She had not appeared for the questioning. Was she still in the house or had the smart bitch made her escape before the incident? If the latter was true, then she had plenty of time to get away with anything—with anyone—while *he* was stuck inside this police cordon. There was nothing to do except search for her on the premises. He looked around carefully to see who else might be missing. If he could figure out the man, he might be able to deduce the manner. However, it seemed that all of his wife's likely lovers were still in view.

He sidled up to Arnie, the party's host. Arnie stared at the inspector, who was conferring with aides in a corner of the living room. One of them leaned against a Chagall print.

"Hey, Arnie."

"Huh? Oh, hi Phil."

"Arnie, you happen to see Marcie around anywhere?"

"Look at 'im!"

"Who? What?"

Perrine whirled around, expecting to see another madman with another bullhorn, but nothing had changed.

"Look at 'im. Him! Leaning against my Chagall!"

"He's barely touching it. Look, Arnie, you seen Marcia?"

"He'll be putting his greasy head against it next. Then what? We have protection against that sort of thing? Stupid fuzz, coming in here and destroying our property. Who pays? They're supposed to be our protectors!"

"They're being very careful. Arnie, I got to locate my wife."

"They're gonna stay longer. I got two hundred steaks rotting out on the patio: What am I supposed to do with them? Cook 'em while these guys hang over the barbecue pit like vultures? Why the hell don't they leave?"

"Arnie, I just want to know if you've seen Marcia."

"Huh? Oh, Marcie. Yeah, no. No, I haven't seen her since before. . . before *it* happened."

"That's a start. Where was she then? Who with?"

"Um, I don't know, talking with somebody. Bill Dobson, I think. Look at that guy, running his filthy hand across the top of the couch. Good thing I had Tania throw on the plastic covers for today. She said I had nothing to worry about, you know, called me a paranoiac because I mind the idea of grease and cigarette burns on my furniture, but I told her—Look at him, did you ever see such blatant disregard for personal property?"

Arnie continued his muttering as Perrine left him.

PERRINE COULDN'T see Bill Dodson anywhere. Why hadn't he thought of him before? It would be like Marcie to suddenly go off with somebody in whom she'd never shown the least interest. But Bill Dodson? He was practically the neighborhood's own private joke—a stumbler, a falling-down drunk, a wideeyed spreader of faux pas. Not Marcie's type at all.

He scanned the room again, looking for a flash of her deep auburn hair among the crowd, hoping that she had mysteriously reappeared. Plenty of bleached blondes, an oversupply of mousy brunettes, a plethora of wide grey-streaks, but no trace of auburn. Moving sideways, he bumped into Rhoda Klenner. Bumping into Rhoda in any way was normally a pleasurable experience. She had perhaps the largest bust in the neigh-

borhood—and attached to the smallest and slimmest frame. Somehow her face was perfect for her body: beautiful, but with the hint of an important secret in her eyes. Her hair-color was the only other distinctive shade at the party, raven-black with strong bluish highlights. Perrine had spent the better part of many social events finding ways to graze, rub against, or otherwise touch her gorgeous body. She seemed to enjoy his endeavors but always, in a voice more suited to a skinny virginal sophomore, turned down any direct requests. Now she recoiled from bodily contact with an uncharacteristic spring. She also turned her head away to hide the tears that he had already seen.

"Something I can do, Rhoda?"

He touched her arm just below the laced sleeve of her red velour dress. Again she quickly backed away from him.

"No. Nothing you can do. I'm all right."

Of course she wasn't. Perrine donated two minutes to an attempt to reach her emotionally. At the same time he tried to get physically closer to her, but it was no use. She needed to maintain the wall around her and was determined to push back any ladders forced against it. Before he left her, he asked:

"You seen Marcia anywhere, Rhoda?"

She looked at him as if she could not believe the question, as if it was somehow heretical. He

studied her eyes, to see if there was any clue in them that she had flipped out. There was nothing, just that incomprehensible disbelief. Finally she said:

"Marcie was . . . over . . . there. By the . . . Chagall."

"When?"

"Before. Not after. Before."

Obviously, Rhoda could not be any help. He backed away from her hypnotized gaze, wondering if he should find her husband and send him to her. George Klenner! Where the hell was George Klenner? Marcie wouldn't go after him, would she? He was famous for his fidelity to Rhoda. You couldn't even get him to fool around on a simple weekend trip with the boys. While they went off searching for towngirls, George always stayed behind in the tent, reading 7-day books from the library. No, it was foolish to suspect him. Not even Marcie. . . *no*, he couldn't say that. Marcie would be turned on immediately if she obtained even a flicker of interest from George Klenner. And where the hell was he now?

Perrine shuddered. It was bad enough to have to look for his wife, but detailed and picturesque suspicions were too much for him right now.

THE INSPECTOR backed Arnie against the wall where the alleged suicide had occurred. He figured that forcing a suspect to stand in the exact spot of the crime might

shake loose an important piece of information from his tightly-held packet of secrets.

"You sure you didn't know the victim?"

"I told you, I never saw the guy in my whole entire life, ever."

"Seems to me you protest a hell of a lot."

"Inspector, will you tell that man to stop leaning against my lawn furniture? They break easy, you know."

"Screw your lawn furniture. We'll tear this place apart to get at the truth."

"Slop is truth for pigs!" said the kid, who had been trailing the inspector.

"Officer," Arnie said, "there's no reason for you to carry this on any—"

"Headquarters called, chief," said Charlie, one of his aides. Charlie was a young man who considered his police academy diploma as a license to practice.

"What's up?"

"Something funny. They've checked the victim's fingerprints, dental work, physical description, everything, and there's no record of him anywhere."

"Tell 'em to send the stuff on to Washington—"

"Piggington, D.C.," said the kid. The inspector visibly shuddered.

"—and check with the computer complex."

"Already done that."

"Already?"

"I put that through first thing when I saw the body. I thought I recognized him, his face seemed familiar."

"How the hell would you know that nut's face?"

"From my days when I was a student infiltrator as lab work for a political crimes course at the academy. I mingled with a lot of the radicals—and a fierce lot they were, sir—and I thought I remembered seeing our victim among them. Probably not, though. These radicals look pretty much alike, after all. I mean, they *really* do. Anyway, initial Washington check revealed no record anywhere of the guy."

"That's impossible. They have *everybody* somewhere on file, don't they?"

"It was thought so, sir. Perhaps a further check will turn something up from some dusty old memory bank."

The aide smiled. Evidently his last remark was something of a joke, so the inspector smiled back.

"Inspector, what about my steaks?"

"What about 'em?"

"They're going to waste!"

"So what do you want me to do?"

"What the hell do you think this is, the Battleship Potemkin? I want to *cook* them before they get maggotty."

"So cook 'em. Don't worry about us. I don't allow my men to eat on duty."

PERRINE DECIDED on a room by room check. He started with the first floor guest room. Leaning against the closed orange door, he thought he heard a noise inside. He put his ear against the wood, while at the same time trying to look casual for any passerby. A woman came out of the bathroom across the hall and looked at him oddly. She was a petite, thin-faced woman in her late thirties, with a dykish hairdo. He smiled.

"Let me listen, too," she said. Positioning her body as if she were an experienced eavesdropper, she leaned her ear against the door.

"Somebody in there all right. Are you police?"

"No, I'm Phil Perrine."

"Oh, you play golf sometimes with my husband. Jim Denton. I'm Jan."

"Hi, Jan. Jim and I've golfed together three or four times."

"He cheats. There certainly is somebody in there all right. Doing pretty good by the sound of it. If I were you, I'd break in now—that is, if you want it *in flagrante delicto*."

"Who said I wanted to break in?"

"We're looking for your wife, aren't we?"

"How'd you know that?"

"I play bridge sometimes with Marcie. C'mon."

She had flung open the door before Perrine could stop her. She also beat him into the room. The couple in the bed did not

hear them because they were completely under the covers. Judging by the configurations of the blankets, they were trying out one of the higher-numbered positions.

"I hope we're not interrupting anything," Jan said. Loudly.

Immobility under the blanket. Perrine tried to imagine the statue which would be exhibited if the curtain was dropped right now. The statue slowly collapsed, then the blanketed pair began a concerned exchange of whispering.

"You might as well come out," Jan said. "All your escape routes've been blocked. We paid off the guards."

First to appear was Bill Dodson. For a second Perrine felt blind fury. He curled his fingers in strangling position.

"Jan," Dodson said, "this is a funny way to pay off—"

"Stow it, Mr. Dodson. We're not really looking for you, anyway. Tell your doxy to come out from under."

Perrine advanced toward the bed. He tested his muscles for readiness. Why did it have to be Bill Dodson? Why couldn't it be George Klenner, or *anybody* else?

"Really, Jan, you've no right to—"

"Mr. Dodson, it is my duty to advise you to avoid saying anything incriminating until you've called your lawyer."

"I am my lawyer. I mean, I am a lawyer."

"Well, say something incriminating then."

"I'll bet this is really a ball for you, Jan, isn't it? I'll bet—"

Perrine halted. Dodson was within arm's reach. At that moment the head of Dodson's bed partner appeared above the silk border of the blanket, and Perrine breathed a sigh of relief. It was not Marcie. It was chubby, witless, just barely attractive Dina Flanders. Perrine and Jan both began to laugh.

"What the hell is this all about?" Dodson shouted, then he peered questioningly at Perrine. "Oh," he said in a calmer voice, "Marcie." He smiled. "Of course, Marcie." He began to guffaw. The sarcastic tone of it checked Perrine's own laughter.

"What's going on in here?" The four of them looked toward the doorway, where the police inspector now stood, a young aide standing on tiptoe to look over his shoulder.

The long silence was broken only by an adolescent chuckle from someone behind the inspector. Finally Jan turned to Perrine and said:

"You any good at alibis?"

The inspector walked into the room. Perrine thought him strange-looking. Such a young face, yet with the definite police scowl intruding, as if part of the department's equipment, an all-purpose law and order mask which could be hung in the locker at quitting time.

"Your name?" he said.

"Perrine."

"And the rest of you?"

"Denton."

"Dodson."

"Flanders."

He stared at each one of them in turn.

"How come *all* you people got two-syllable last names?" he said, but he left without waiting for an answer.

Perrine apologized to Dodson and Dina, and backed out of the room. Jan followed him. In the hallway she shook his hand.

"Good luck," she said. "God be with you."

"Yes," he said, "and with Chiang Kai-Shek and free peoples everywhere."

THE INSPECTOR stood at an open window and savored the charcoal and Gulf-lite odors drifting up from the barbecue pit. The party had resumed. Some of the guests stood rather stiffly, as if they felt themselves to be part of a line-up. There was a certain amount of looking over shoulders at policemen standing around the patio borders. Otherwise, things had returned to normal. Arnie handled steaks cavalierly, flipping them like a front-window pancake turner.

The inspector, hearing footsteps behind him, instinctively turned and faced Charlie, his aide.

"Sir?" Charlie said.

"Yeah?"

"Something funny."

"Shoot."

"Well, I just called headquarters and spoke to Dr. Farr. He's performed an autopsy and, well, there's something odd about the results."

"What?"

"The victim had an artificial pancreas."

The inspector repeated Charlie's declaration in his mind, trying to see where it applied.

"Artificial pancreas, huh?"

"That's what he said."

"That good or bad?"

"He said it's highly unusual. You know how he is, always understates, always acts like he's talking to Joe Friday. Says he hasn't kept up, but he is not *aware* of the development anywhere of an artificial pancreas. Especially, he said, an artificial pancreas painted dayglo orange. Especially, he then said, with the words **FUCK THE A.M.A.** written across it."

The inspector squinted at Charlie and said:

"What's a pancreas? What part of the body? What's it do?"

"Offhand I don't know, sir."

"You think it's important?"

"I can't say. Maybe."

"Well, check it out. Doctor say anything else?"

"Apparently the guy had three or four extra teeth and, these are the doc's words, he seemed to be sexually endowed beyond the average."

"Headquarters come up with anything else?"

"Nope. Looks like there's no record anywhere of the victim."

The inspector again looked out the window. Many of the guests had been served. Conversation was underscored with the sounds of slicing, hacking, steak sauce pouring.

"What's the point?" he muttered. "What's the point?"

AS HE FIRST ASCENDED the narrow stairs, Perrine thought it smelled like most other attics. Then, mixed in with the other musty odors, there seemed to be a wisp of Marcia's perfume. He took the last eleven steps in three leaps. If he caught her now, there'd be no escape for her or her stud.

He looked around the large attic. The usual treasures—peeling lamppoles, marriage-present china, damp-looking book club editions—were crammed into the various angles in sagging cardboard boxes, cracking suitcases, wrinkled paper bags. There seemed to be several pathways, side aisles. He must be careful not to allow them a way out, he must search methodically. He started to inch slowly forward but suddenly, to his left, he heard two faint sounds that set him into violent motion. First, the unmistakable squeak of a bedspring and, second, a woman's sob.

Taking a right turn around a splintered bureau, Perrine discovered the sources of both noises. The bedspring belonged to an

enormous double bed with a deep sag in the middle of its mattress. Crouched, but sitting up, in the middle of the sag was Rhoda Klenner, weeping.

Perrine felt like crying, too. This attic was the last area of the house which he had not covered in his systematic exploration. If Marcia and her lover were anywhere in the house, they must have found the key to invisibility. With a sigh of defeat, he sat on the edge of the bed. Rhoda became aware of him.

"Don't touch me," she said, between sobs, backing laboriously out of the sag and toward the attic wall. Perrine raised his arms.

"Do these look like hands with lustful intentions?"

"To me they do."

"Well, trust me."

She started to say something else, but her crying regained mastery and she slid back into the sag. Perrine initially felt a wave of sympathy but was distracted by the seductive heavings of Rhoda's enviable breasts. Then he decided he wanted to touch her and, after all, could not be trusted. Who could endorse trust vowed to a desirable chick like Rhoda Klenner?

"What are you crying about?" he said when her weeping had somewhat subsided. "Something about George?"

She scowled quizzically at Perrine, as if she could not remember that George was her husband.

"Not George. Who cares about him? George wouldn't know how to kill himself if he had a terminal disease."

Now it was Perrine's turn to look puzzled and piece together the meaning of her words.

"Oh, you mean *him*. The suicide. Did he have a terminal disease? Rhoda, if you knew the guy, you should tell that twitchy inspector about—"

"No, no, no. I didn't *know* him. I'm sure none of us ever saw him before. He—"

"Funny way to knock himself off, just walk in somewhere strange and do it. What a useless and meaningless way to go."

"Useless? Meaningless? Are you—"

Again the crying overcame her. Her sobs were so tortuous that she had to lean forward to ease the pain they caused. Perrine slid into the sag. He could sense that her agony made her touchable. Gently he began to stroke her back. She did not seem to notice.

"I can't stand it," she said when she was able to talk again.

"Can't stand what?" he said, moving in closer to her, feeling himself slide further into the sag, putting an arm around her waist.

"Not knowing."

"Not knowing what?" He dabbed at her face with a handkerchief, wiping away tears.

"Anything. Anything about anything."

"Yeah, it's hell."

Letting the handkerchief fall,

he allowed his hand to continue stroking her face—tracing a line along the cheekbone to the corner of the jaw, along the jaw to the rounded tip of her chin, then in another line down to her throat. All the tracing was done delicately, his fingertips just barely touching her skin. She endured his touches silently, did not even seem to notice. Perrine felt a small sense of victory since, five minutes ago, she had begged not to be touched at all.

“Do you ever feel anything inside—a churning of the stomach, a vague pain behind the eyes—when you watch TV news?” she asked but, instead of waiting for an answer, went on to other questions. “Do you ever drive through a slum area and wonder if you should donate your garbage instead of mashing it? Do you ever go to parties like this and look around for machine-gunners in the sculptured trees? Do you ever feel an overwhelming desire to go into libraries and tear to shreds all their copies of New York Times Book Reviews?”

While she spoke, his hand reached the lace collar of her dress. He hesitated, not knowing whether to initiate undressing tactics or skip over the lace border and let his hand explored her rounded beauties beneath the stimulating texture of velour. With Rhoda the conservative approach seemed more advantageous, so his fingertips skimmed across the lace. As he felt the soft-

ness of the velour and, simultaneously, the curve that marked the beginning of the breast's slope, he noticed that the stirring in his loins was progressing ahead of schedule. He breathed deeply and concentrated on control. As his fingertips slalomed down the slope, Rhoda became aware of his touch and stared down at his hand. He stopped its movement but waited for her to remove it or move herself. She merely stared noncommittally. Slowly he allowed his hand to complete its descent. He studied Rhoda's face carefully for positive or negative responses. Although his touch was still gentle, in his palm he could feel the hardness of a quite ample nipple through the layers of bra and velour.

In a smooth professional movement, he nestled Rhoda securely in the bed's sagging middle, eased on top of her, and began to kiss her surprisingly-responsive lips. The rest would have been easy, except that Rhoda kept sobbing at the most disconcerting moments. Trying to calm her down, he exhausted his supply of foreplay techniques. Finally he whispered to her:

“Don't cry. If you want me to stop just say so.”

Astonishment in her tearfilled eyes.

“No, please don't stop. I'm not crying about you, about *this*. I want you. Please.”

The desire in her voice further excited him. He performed the

act itself ritualistically, as if to exorcise demons by it. Afterward, he hugged her close to him and felt the wetness of her new tears against his own cheek.

THE KID'S ROOM suggested the austerity of a monk's cell. The inspector felt as if he had stepped into a sanctuary, except for the discomfort caused by the hard-eyed stare coming from the Che Guevara poster on the wall. The room had the usual furnishings—bed, dresser, desk—but the surfaces of the furniture seemed swept clean of trivial decoration. The kid sat on the bed, taking long easy drags from the stem of a water pipe.

"I could arrest you for that, you know," the inspector said, pointing at the pipe.

"Go ahead. Take me in, pig."

"Screw off, punk. Give me a hit."

The kid passed him the water pipe. The inspector took one long and deep inhalation, and held it. It was good stuff. He could feel it immediately. He returned the pipe to the kid. For a silent five minutes they passed it back and forth. The only sound in the room came from its intermittent bubbling.

"Want to commune with me?" the inspector finally asked.

"No."

"There is no generation gap, only experience differentials."

"Shit."

The inspector walked, some-

what unsteadily, to the kid's desk and switched on the desk lamp. And switched it off again. And on—this time sliding it across the bare shiny desk top and aiming it at the kid's face. He then extinguished all the other lights in the room and closed window curtains. Now there was just the light shining directly on the kid's face. The kid did not flinch one eye or try to move out of the light, as most third degree victims did. He just stared ahead calmly, the water pipe gently rocking in his hands.

The inspector sat at the end of the bed and cleared his throat, making room there for his tough-cop voice. He turned to the kid and started to ask a question, but was suddenly caught by the stark pattern of shadow on the youth's face. Especially the shadow of the nose which reached, long and pointed, across and down his cheek as if seeking the corner of his jaw, intersecting instead the shadow of an isolated strand of hair. In his mind the inspector sketched a black and white abstract from the shadow configurations. The kid raised the water pipe to his mouth and new shadow-abstracts developed. The inspector swallowed hard and consciously redirected his efforts.

"I want ask you some questions about . . . incident downstairs."

"Eat fuzz."

"Don't have to be insulting. Authority on your side."

"Shit, yes."

"You know anything at all

about. . . incident?"

"Depends, pig."

"On what?"

"Whether you mean actual facts or metaphysical implications of the act."

"Implications. Any implications."

Somewhere behind him there was a knock, a tentative sound, knuckles grazing the wood paneling. The inspector, not remembering the arrangement of the room, felt his way to the door. Without opening it, he whispered:

"Yeah?"

"Inspector?"

"What is it, Charlie?"

"More news."

"Shoot."

The kid made ack-ack noises.

"Department just called. There've been two other suicides today, just like this one."

"Just like it?"

"Very close, it seems."

"Knew there was a pattern. Knew it."

"Bullhorn, obscenities, gun to mouth, everything quite alike. One victim's been autopsied already."

"And?"

"Artificial liver, same message across it. They want us back at headquarters for conference pronto-tonto."

"Well, send the boys. You, too. I'll get there when I can."

"But the commissioner says *everybody*."

"I'll be there!"

"What should I say to the commissioner?"

"To jack off till I get there."

Outside the room, Charlie gurgled. Inside, the kid laughed. The inspector made his way back to the desk, leaned against it, and said:

"Okay, kid, about the. . . incident."

AT THE BOTTOM of the attic stairs, Rhoda gifted Perrine with a long and passionate kiss. Removing his lips from her with some effort, he said:

"I'll go now. Wait five minutes, then you."

"Right."

As he put his hand on the doorknob, she said:

"Wednesday, 10:30."

"I'll be there."

The party obviously ended, the house was sepulchrally quiet. Perrine descended to the living room, kicking aside party debris as he went. The living room was being cleaned and straightened by Arnie's wife, Tania. She looked oddly at Perrine but said nothing. He and Tania rarely spoke, the blessed result of some past event which he had forgotten. She turned her back on him and straightened the Chagall.

Arnie was out on the patio, sitting on a stepladder and assiduously rubbing detergent into the imitation-stone wall.

"Hi, Phil," he said. "You miss all the excitement?"

Arnie apparently had forgotten

that they'd had a conversation in the middle of it. No need to remind him.

"No," Perrine said, "I was here and there."

"I wondered. Marcie's been calling about every twenty minutes. Better call her back before she has a stroke."

"No, I don't think so. I think I will leave Marcie twisting and untwisting the phonecord for another couple of hours at least."

Perrine wandered around the patio. Somewhere upstairs a recording of rock music began playing. Arnie continued scrubbing the wall.

"Goddamned shit'll never come out," he said. "Some of it's imbedded. I'll have to replace this whole section."

Perrine, walking by the glass doors to the living room, heard laughter inside. He peered through the glass. Rhoda sat in a plastic-covered armchair. She was still laughing. Hard to tell if it was caused by hysteria or amusement. Tania's cold reaction to it showed nothing either way. The phone began to ring. Perrine in-

stinctively jumped sideways, so that he could not be seen from the living room. He walked around Arnie's stepladder and examined the wall.

"You'd do better," he said, "to have the whole wall ripped off. This stuff fades. If you just patch it up, the new material will stand out."

"You'll give me a good price, I suppose?"

"Sure. Call me at the office Monday morning and I can quote you some book figures, then we'll see what we can rake off."

"Good idea."

Arnie eased himself off the stepladder.

"Arnie!" shouted Tania from inside the house.

"Always hollers, never takes a few steps to talk to me," Arnie said to Perrine, then shouted back: "Yeah?"

"Perrine out there still? Marcie wants him."

"No, he's long gone," Arnie said, winking at Perrine. Then the both of them began to laugh quietly to themselves.

—ROBERT THURSTON

ON SALE NOW IN JULY FANTASTIC

L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP & LIN CARTER'S NEW CONAN short novel, RED MOON OF ZEMBABWEI; also, THE STRONGHOLD by MARK S. GESTON, TRACK TWO by BARRY N. MALZBERG, AT BUG'S COMPLETE by DAVID R. BUNCH, and an outstanding short novel, THE KOZMIC KID by RICHARD SNEAD.

NEW ROUTE TO THE INDIES

ROBERT F. YOUNG

*Robert F. Young's last appearance here was his "No Deposit * No Refill" (February); now he returns with the strange story of the first voyage to the stars, or is it something else entirely. . . ?*

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

IF PRIDE goes before a fall, Admiral Dominic DeSanto was overdue for one. Not that he didn't have every right to puff out his chest. InternASA's successful utilization of his spacewarp-theory ("superspace" is curved; hence "infraspace" represents the true distance between any two celestial bodies and constitutes a shortcut) had enabled the *Sophia* and her two sister ships, the *Anna* and the *Gina*, to reach the environs of Proxima Centauri in one fourth the time it would have taken them if they'd gone the long way around. And if the little planet he'd set out to "discover" hadn't been there to greet him upon the fleet's emergence from infraspace, it was only because her orbit had carried her to huge Proxima's far side.

The admiral had but one real regret—that infraspace by its very nature had made it impossible for the *Sophia* to make the historic

voyage alone. "Discovering" Proxima's one and only satellite was *his* Dream, and it galled him to have to share it with the captains of the *Anna* and the *Gina*—the one a white named Krasnov and the other a black named Washington—

"Making one of them a black was a good idea, but not good enough. The principal character is still a throwback to the final sequence of Act II, and I can't see where the situation is a hell of a lot different either."

"You're being hypercritical. Like any other cosmic writing team we're limited to so many basic characters and so many basic situations, and in a long play like this one, both are bound to re-occur."

"I still say we've fallen into a rut. Even the damned ships are the same!"

"They are not! You just say that

because I designed them! They're altogether different and you know it!"

"Oh, they're different on the outside all right. But underneath they're still the same old trio of wooden tubs. By the way, what does the plot say DeSanto & Co. are going to find on Proxima Centauri One—'Indians'?"

"Of course not! It merely says 'a believable race of beings'."

"No matter how 'believable' we make them, they'll still be 'Indians'."

"Well naturally they will if you take that attitude! You're just jealous because the Producer okayed my plot-outline instead of yours!"

"All right, you two-stop squabbling and get back to work! At this rate we'll never finish the play. We've got millions of other situations to work out, billions of other characters to cope with, and a zillion loose ends to tie up. As to the black, don't you think he needs a new name? 'Washington' smacks too much of the Afros' original role."

"But if we change his name we'll have to change his father's name and his grandfather's name and his greatgrandfather's name and—"

"So change them. It only requires minor surgery."

—a black named Roosevelt—

"No, no—'Roosevelt' has the same connotations 'Washington'."



does. We need an ordinary name—one without ethnic overtones.”

“Brown?”

“That won’t do either. Let’s make it just plain ‘Jones’.”

—a black named Jones.

Perhaps if Admiral DeSanto’s Dream had been one of those airy affairs that seldom come true he wouldn’t have minded sharing it. But it wasn’t. It was firmly attached to a solid foundation that he had laid himself while his compeers stood by and laughed. And if it was about to become a reality, he had no one to thank but himself. It was he who had made the rounds of the rich bureaus, waited humbly in the lavish lobbies of InterCOM, SpaceProJet, Star-REACH and InterNASA, begged in their big burnished offices virtually on hands and knees. And it was he who, when InterNASA showed him the front door, had succeeded in getting in the back by ingratiating himself with the vice president’s favorite wife.

How could he possibly have foreseen that the subsequent dry runs the big bureau conducted would show that while infraspaces could be penetrated, it could be navigated only by “objectified triangulation”—a complex process that required three ships?

Well anyway, the *Sophia* was the biggest one.

Standing on her bridge, Admiral DeSanto taped a brief entry

in her log: ‘Day 412, 0620 hours: All is well, or at least as well as can be expected. Since the fleet’s emergence into supraspace a short while ago, Proxima Centauri One has remained stubbornly behind her primary, denying us visual proof of her existence. I have been advised by the fleet’s on-duty officers that the delayed sighting has augmented the irrational fear engendered in the crew by starless infraspaces, even though the fleet’s instruments indicate unequivocally the little planet’s presence. We are at this moment entering into a wide west-to-east solar orbit to expedite visual sighting and to abort potential mutiny. All on-duty officers are bearing arms pursuant to my order of Day 399.’”

After finishing the entry, Admiral DeSanto glanced at the big bridge viewscreen in hopes that since his last look a twinkle might have come into view around the concave slope of the big flaming mountain Proxima resembled at such close range. None had. Disappointed, he told the navigation officer to carry on, stepped down to the main deck and walked briskly to the helical stairway that led up to the observation deck. Eagerly, he pounded up the steel stairs. Stepping onto the deck was like stepping out onto the hull. Around him and above him beyond the utterly transparent bubble of the enclosure the stars, all the more dear after their absence during the long infraspaces

interim, exploded into blazing blues and greens and yellows, incandescent yet icily cold. Alpha Centauri A and B burned like a pair of distant bonfires, the one yellow, the other orange. Proxima towered like a golden Everest high into the heavens. To starboard and to port, the Anna and the Gina glittered like cuff links on the black sleeve of space.

Space“man” 3rd class Hucks was on duty. He slouched in the crow’s-nest gazing sullenly into the cobalt-tinted lens of the master viewscope, absently scratching his left armpit—

“I think we’d better strike ‘crow’s-nest’ and substitute ‘observation chair’. If there’s one thing the play doesn’t need at this point, it’s archaic terminology.”

“But strictly speaking ‘crows’-nest’ isn’t a term—it’s a metaphor. Precisely the sort of metaphor that would leap readily to the mind of a seasoned space-man like DeSanto.”

“If he was a seasoned sailor, it might. There’s a difference—not that anybody would know it from this cornball script!”

“The real reason you want to strike it is because I thought of it. You’ve been picking on me ever since we began Act III and I’m getting darn sick and tired of it! It’s not my fault if things aren’t going right. And don’t try to blame the original plot either—it’s been stretched so out of shape by additions and alterations it’s no

longer even recognizable!”

“I’m telling you two again—stop squabbling! Granted, the play’s not going right, but we’ve still got to get the job done. As I see it, our troubles began when we tacked that trick ending onto Act II, but outside of chucking the whole of Act III there’s nothing we can do about it. As for the expression ‘crow’s-nest’, I also am of the opinion that it’s a bit too archaic for—”

“Both of you are against me!—I see it now! You’re—”

“No one’s against you. It’s all in your head. Now calm down and let’s get back to work!”

—in the observation chair gazing sullenly into the cobalt-tinted lens of the master viewscope, absently scratching his left armpit. “Any sign of her yet?” the admiral asked.

Hucks transferred his sullen gaze from the big mountain to Admiral DeSanto’s Adam’s apple. “Nothing.”

“Let me have a look.”

After Hucks vacated the chair, the admiral sat down in it and looked into the lens. He counted three solar prominences and two sun spots as he tried vainly to peer around the fiery concave slopes beyond which lay the culmination of his Dream and the realization of his Destiny. However, he was not wholly thwarted. In his mind if not on his retina he could see the real estate and the riches 90 percent of which soon

would be InternASA's and 10 percent of which soon would be his. He would take charge the moment the fleet made planetfall and claim everything in the name of his bureaucratic benefactor. Continents, seas; mineral rights, offshore drilling-rights, aborigines and all. Not for him Moonrocks or the fleeting fame of being the first man on Mars. He was an explorer of the Old School. Not only did he know where his Treasure was, he knew what it was.

"We're too close to her primary," he said finally. "That's why it's taking such a long time for her to show up: But keep your eyes peeled, Hucks—she'll be coming round the mountain any minute now." He laughed appreciatively at his clever little play on words.

"Sure she will," Hucks said, sitting back down.

Admiral DeSanto let the sarcasm pass, returned to the main deck and made his way back to the bridge. He was mildly surprised to find that his hands were trembling. Not violently by any means, but enough so that he could discern a faint quivering of his fingers. While part of his tension could be attributed to Greed, not all of it could. He had been under constant pressure ever since InterISA—

"Hold it! Hold it! Somebody started to write 'Inter-ISABELLA'!"

"A slip of the pen, was all. You two guys picking on me all the time makes it hard for me to con-

centrate!"

—ever since InternASA had agreed to provide the funds and the knowhow necessary to lift his Dream off the ground. The big bureau had been on his back continually right up to the moment of lift-off—nay, right up to the moment when the fleet's entry into infraspace had mercifully terminated radio contact. And the sub-human crew had been bugging him ever since. Heroic he might be, but he wasn't made of steel. Nor was he perfect either. That Proxima Centauri One might be behind her sun when the fleet re-entered supraspace was a contingency he'd simply failed to foresee, just as he'd failed to foresee the demoralizing effect infraspace would have on the "men".

"Ahem," said the navigation officer from just behind him.

"What is it, Nibbs?"

"You—you seem kind of downcast, sir. I—I just wanted you to know that I and the other officers stand as firmly behind you as ever."

"It's nice of you to say so, Nibbs."

"Not at all, sir. We've believed in you wholeheartedly from the very beginning and we still do."

"Thank you, Nibbs."

Nibbs sat back down at the chart table. The intercom buzzed. Admiral DeSanto activated the screen, materializing the chest, arms and shoulders and the

youthful sideburned face of Ensign Hojnowski. "Hojnowski, Officer of the Deck reporting, sir. From the crew's quarters."

"What the devil are you doing in the crew's quarters?"

"In view of the 'men's' steadily deteriorating morale and the inevitable side effects, it seemed like the proper place for me to go."

"What's their mood now?"

"Mean, sir, to put it mildly."

"Then get back on deck where you belong!"

"I—I thought that my presence here would have a calming effect on them, sir. But it hasn't. They're growing meaner by the minute. Even worse, they're becoming hysterical. They're saying there's isn't any such planet as Proxima Centauri One, that the universe is flat and that if we don't turn back we're liable to fall off the edge of it, that—"

"They can read the instruments, can't they? Then why can't they believe them?"

"I'm—I'm afraid they lack your faith in them, sir. Even I, a member of a far more sophisticated species, sometimes find myself doubting. I wish I had *your* faith, sir."

"Some men believe in God and some men believe in Womankind. I believe in instruments."

"Now there's a cornball line if I ever read one. Almost as cornball as that Nibbs bit."

"STOP PICKING ON ME!"

"I'm—I'm afraid I'll have to sign off now, sir."

The admiral saw how pale the ensign's face had become. "Hojnowski—what's wrong?"

"There's—there's a Holtz & Hamaha laser pistol pressing against my coccyx, sir. I'm—I'm afraid we have a mutiny on our hands."

"You damned fool!—where's *your* Holtz & Hamaha?"

"It's—it's the same one that's pressing against my coccyx."

A hairy face that Admiral DeSanto recognized as Engine "man" 1st class Grubbs's came into view next to Hojnowski's right elbow. The Engine "man" bared his big yellow teeth in a big insolent smile. A moment later, the screen went blank.

A HOT WAVE compounded by frustration, fury and just plain anger broke over the admiral's classic countenance, staining it purple. Leave it to InternASA to try to cut costs by employing superchimps instead of humans! Jeopardizing a whole expedition just so they could get around the spaceman-union's \$6.43 an hour wage rate! He'd tell them a thing or two if and when he got back! He'd never liked superchimps to begin with. Not only were they ignorant and superstitious, they were arrogant, indolent and insubordinate. Pounding down the main deck toward the crew's quarters, the admiral—

"This is too much! Didn't we

have enough human characters to contend with without introducing genetically intellectualized apes?"

"Well don't blame me! It wasn't my idea any more than it was yours!"

"I'm not blaming you."

"You are too!"

"I'm telling you two for the last time—knock it off!"

—Pounding down the main deck toward the crew's quarters, the admiral framed in his mind the ultimatum he would shortly deliver to Engine "man" 1st class Grubbs & Co. So absorbed was he with finding the right words he failed to notice the Holtz & Hamaha directed at him from the ventilator intake duct above cross-corridor B, and when he finally did notice it and remembered that the duct led to the crew's quarters, the foremost photons of the maximum-intensity beam were less than a micromilimeter away from his forehead. Followed closely by their amplified legions, they bored into his brain at a slight downward angle, emerged from his occiput and burned through the main deck, the sub deck, the radiation shield and the hull, and continued on into—

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! The admiral wasn't supposed to die! Who was responsible for that laser beam?"

"I was!"

"But he was the main character

of Act III! You know as well as I do that we can't bring him back to life. Only the Producer can do things like that. Admiral DeSanto was scheduled to make two more voyages yet!"

"Well he's not going to make them now! Now maybe you guys will stop picking on me and leave me alone!"

"Take it easy, both of you. Maybe this is the opportunity we've been unconsciously wishing for all along."

"The admiral's dead, the flagship's losing air by the second, and you want us to just sit here and do nothing? The least we could do is patch up that hole in her hull!"

"Forget the hole in her hull—it's no longer important. Consider: Hasn't every one of us secretly wanted to junk Act III ever since we started writing it? Hasn't every one of us realized all along that when we tacked that surprise ending onto Act II we not only violated our artistic integrity but weighed the play down with additional background it didn't need and, ultimately, weighed ourselves down with more characters and complications than we could efficiently handle? Hasn't every one of us unconsciously wished that something would go radically wrong and provide us with an excuse to scrap Act III so that we could delete the present Act II ending and, simply by letting what the hero thought he discovered be what he discovered, re-

write Act III along similar but much simpler lines? And doesn't what just did go wrong prove everything I've just said?

"I guess it does at that."

"That's the real reason I knocked off poor Admiral De-Santo, isn't it! And not because you guys were picking on me. I guess you might say I sort of sacrificed him for the good of the play."

"Well don't shed any sad tears over him because he's very shortly going to be retro-reincarnated."

"But won't the producer object to all this?"

"He lost interest in the play ages ago. If we make the transition smooth enough, He'll never even know the difference. Thanks to the blatant similarity of the two situations, that shouldn't be particularly difficult..."

the early-morning shadow of the fo'c's'le, the admiral suddenly paused. He listened. The exultant cry from the crow's-nest came again:

"Land ho! Land hooooooooooooo!"

Running to the rail of the flagship, the admiral gazed westward through the morning mist shrouding the Atlantic. He strained his eyes, wishing for his glass. But a glass proved unnecessary: he could see the faint green line along the horizon's edge without one.

A cheer rose up behind him.

The captains of the two sister ships also peered through the early-morning mist. They, too, discerned the historic green line breaking the horizon.

"The Indies!" the admiral cried.
"We've reached the Indies!"
(This time, he was right.)

—Pacing the wooden deck in

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

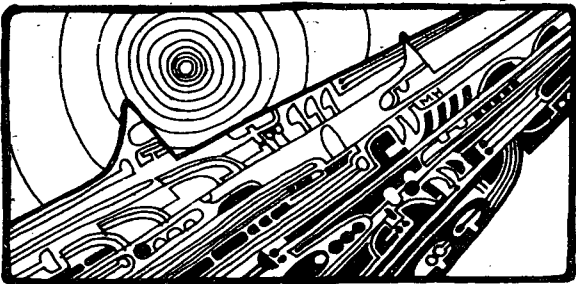
ON SALE IN SEPT. FANTASTIC (July 23rd)

A BRAND NEW NOVEL by THOMAS BURNETT SWANN, WILL-O-THE-WISP; also new stories by LIN CARTER, BLACK HAWK OF VALKARTH, GORDON EKLUND, TATTERED STARS, TARNISHED BARS, GEO. ALEC EFFINGER, POETS AND HUMANS, BARRY N. MALZBERG, HANGING, THOMAS F. MONTELEONE, PRESENT PERFECT, and a new feature, by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP, WILLIAM MORRIS; JACK OF ALL ARTS.

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the Future in Books



SF: THE NATURE OF THE MEDIUM

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

IN AN EARLIER ARTICLE ("SF: A Sociological Perspective," *FANTASTIC* March 1974) I suggested that a sociological perspective might be useful in science fiction criticism. I hinted that by considering SF as a social phenomenon in its own right rather than as a form of literature we might be better able to explain some of the puzzling features of the *genre*. I should now like to follow up by taking a closer look at the implications of describing SF as a medium of communication.

Let us first consider the question: what is a medium?

Human beings use media because they are not telepathic. There is no direct way that a man can transfer the content of another man's mind into his own, or convey the content of his own to another. In order that com-

munication may take place at all a medium of some kind must be employed. One primary medium developed by man was speech. In this process ideas are translated into phonemes, transmitted as sound waves and re-translated into ideas by the recipient. The information carrying capacity of the medium is very high, but it is not absolute. Not all ideas can be conveyed by speech.

Writing is a secondary medium developed from speech. It is a further translation of speech into new symbols. The *content* of writing is speech, but again we observe that a certain information carrying capacity is "lost in translation". In making speech into writing, meanings conveyed by tone and emphasis are partly lost. Print is a medium whose content is writing. Print is much more *like* writing than writing is like

speech, and the loss of information carrying capacity is not nearly so great. But print lacks the *character* of writing, and loses that capacity for expression. The use of italics to indicate stress is virtually all that remains of the emphatic capabilities of the written word.

These elementary observations help to point out certain "rules" which apply to the relationships between media. The cardinal rule, familiar to all readers of McLuhan, is that *the content of a medium is always another medium*. Corollary to this is the rule that a medium, in containing another, always loses something of the information carrying capacity of the contained medium.

There are, however, other observations yet to be made. The fact that writing cannot carry as much information as speech does not mean that it is less *useful* as a medium. By virtue of the manner in which it contains speech, writing gains several new properties as a medium which speech lacks. Writing is portable, whereas speech is not. Writing is long-lasting, whereas speech is not. Writing permits dissociation of transmitter and receiver. It allows the spatial sorting of data-classification and indexing. It can be combined with other media (pictorial) much more easily.

The translation of writing into print involves a small loss in information capacity but a fairly considerable gain in the proper-

ties of the medium. It increases the speed of reading and the generalization of the activity. The mass production of the printed book encourages the use of print as a data store and takes a certain burden off the memory by providing it with *reference* books. The standardization of printed characters is a further step in the dissociation of writer and reader.

We can, therefore, add a second corollary rule to that previously deduced: that a medium, in the manner by which it contains another, gains new potential in terms of social usage.

In order to relate these principles to literary media, and SF in particular, we merely have to extend our "genealogy of media" two extra steps. Literature is a medium whose content is print. SF is a medium whose content is literature. (We have now traced the family tree of SF all the way back to pure mentality, in mediumistic terms. Many other media "branch" at each point in the sequence, but our concern is only with this one line.)

In order that we may see more clearly the relationship between SF and literature, let us first look at the relationship between literature and its own parent medium, print. The essential property of print which makes it useful is ease of access and usage, promoting data storage facilities. Literature contains print by concentrating on the *modelling* capacity of the medium. Literature becomes a

rather limited tool in the storage of information, but it becomes very useful in the organisation of certain types of information into models of reality. The evolution of the literary medium from the print medium establishes a particular ability for data *processing*. The use of literature is not so much a matter of factual reference as a matter of social reference. Literature makes use of the speed of assimilation characteristic of its contained print medium in building whole *patterns* of information rather than unitary blocks. This is a much more complex form of data organisation than simple classification, which became possible with writing. Culture (in both the general and the special sense) can be embodied in literature and communicated by literature.

What, then is SF? Clearly, media evolving from literature, losing some of the overall information carrying capacity of the whole literary medium, may specialise in either of two ways: they may feature a special method of processing data, or a method of processing special data. We may assume that the treatment of specialised data will encourage the use of specialised methods, and therefore the second alternative includes the first. The reverse is not necessarily true: special methods of handling data do not necessarily restrict the data.

SF falls into the second of these categories in that it deals with a specific kind of data. In my previ-

ous article I argued that the essential property of SF, *not* in terms of its content, but in the way people regard it (and thus, perhaps, the way they use it) is tied up with an "extrapolative paradigm": the insistence (not necessarily true) that SF features a special (extrapolative) way of processing special (scientific) data.

At one time, the SF establishment tended to concentrate on a very narrow range of data, defined by the so-called "hard sciences" (physics, chemistry and biology). Lately, however, the range of data has extended through the "softer" sciences (psychology, sociology, linguistics, anthropology etc.). Nevertheless, it remains the field of data which restricts SF relative to its contained medium. The extrapolative method is only the method appropriate to the consideration of the role played by this field of data in a social context.

What, then, does SF lose relative to its parent medium, and what does it gain by virtue of its specialisation? In terms of information carrying capacity it is fairly obvious what SF loses relative to literature as a whole. Literature provides a whole "social reference book"—a massive distillation of the culture of a particular time. In the main, however, its concern is the temporally static and the temporally enduring. SF, with a much narrower field of vision, is able to concentrate first and foremost on those aspects of

culture which are temporally dynamic and constantly changing.

Critics of SF whose perspective is defined solely by literary considerations seem to think that SF should aspire to fulfil all the functions and potentials of literature. This is ludicrous. If SF did that it would no longer *be* SF. The literary critic might, perhaps, regard the death of SF as an independent medium as a "progressive" step. I cannot agree—in terms of the development of media it would be a decidedly *retrogressive* step. The critic who thinks of culture solely in terms of literature is led to make the conceptual error that literature "contains" science fiction. But if we regard literature and SF as media exactly the reverse is true. Science fiction contains, and therefore *constrains* literature. This does not mean that SF is a "lesser" medium than literature, somehow inferior to the so-called "mainstream".

SF, in discarding a large part of the range of literary activity, becomes particularly and specifically applicable to a certain *context* of social reference: the context which extends beyond the present into the future.

The development of SF from literature hinges on the same property of print as the evolution of literature from its parent—it is the *speed* of assimilation which enables the medium to transmit patterns which are extended in time rather than in temporally defined space.

So what?

Well, for one thing, if we accept that SF is an intrinsically different medium from the medium which it contains, then the criticism of SF on the grounds of whether it is "good literature" or "bad literature" becomes redundant. "Good" (i.e. useful) SF will undoubtedly have certain things in common with "good" (useful) literature, but they are not and can never be the same thing. It is a gross error to assume that the necessary critical tools for the study of SF are already extant in those used for the study of literature. We cannot judge SF purely and simply by "literary standards".

Similarly, we must not assume that all the methods evolved by the mainstream and by other literary *genres* for the handling of their data are automatically applicable to the special requirements of SF. Conversely, techniques successful in SF will not necessarily be useful in the mainstream. "Bad" literary techniques are not necessarily "bad" SF techniques. "Good" literary techniques will not necessarily produce "good" SF.

There has long been a current of opinion within the SF establishment that anything done by the practitioners of "real literature" can only improve the quality of SF if it is imitated within the medium. This is just not so. (At the same time, it is patently ridiculous to oppose experimenta-

tion in narrative strategy and modes of presentation. Without experiment the true potential of the medium cannot be explored. The danger lies in the attitude that experimental results in the mainstream hold good for SF.)

If we accept that the key property of print which permits the “evolutionary chain” of print—literature—SF is the speed of processing (1) and the corollary ease of perception, then it must surely be obvious that techniques which do not facilitate perception and understanding within the special contexts of SF will not be readily adaptable to the medium. Many techniques evolved in the mainstream increase the *density* of data, relying on its familiarity to enhance pattern-perception. SF deals with data which is fundamentally exotic, and simplicity of organisation cannot be so readily disposed of.

McLuhan defines media as “artificial extensions of sensory experience.” SF extends only part of the range of sensory experience which is the concern of literature, but it extends it in a different direction—a direction which is defined more by the temporal dimensions than the spatial ones—and in our attempts to “improve” SF we must remain aware of this crucial difference between the media.

Personally, I believe that the campaign to get SF “accepted as literature” is a waste of time. Indeed, I think that the concept of

literature as the *elite* cultural medium is out of date. We have witnessed the recent evolution of a whole host of new media, *all* of which are handling and organising data, and all of which not only represent culture in the widest possible sense but *are* culture in the widest possible sense. In sociological terms *what* we communicate and the *ways* we communicate define what we *are*.

In the age when many of our most powerful media have not evolved from print the book is losing its monopoly on culture. It will not become obsolete, but its role will change. In the words of McLuhan: “Print would seem to have lost much of its monopoly as a channel of information, but it has acquired new interest as a tool in the training of perception.”

(2) I believe that this is how we should define science fiction’s role in contemporary society: as a “tool in the training of perception.” I think that recent trends in science fiction offer clear testimony to the fact that this is the way in which science fiction is evolving. SF has “overflowed” its literary medium. There has been a lateral evolution of SF, so that in the seventies it contains not only literature but also cinema, TV and comics. The academic medium, which contains literature as well as many other media, is now expanding to contain SF. Not all academic studies of SF are based in literary departments—London’s SF Foundation, for instance, is part of the

Department of Applied Philosophy.

It is possible that the SF establishment might gain in self-awareness and discover a better chance of increasing the esteem in which it is held by the public if its members were not so ready to accept the role of third-rate purveyors of a "literary culture" which is already past its time. The quest to "define" an entity called "science fiction" within such a literary culture is really quite futile. The treatment of the text as an object complete in itself, as the literary critics would have us believe that it is, serves only to obscure the fact that both writer and reader are using the medium to ends which are *not* completely divorced from the fabric of everyday life. It is not the information passing through the medium which is of primary interest, but the way the information is used by the participants (which depends partly on the way it is organised by the writer and partly on the way it is understood by the reader). We cannot define SF—we can only describe it, and no amount of pontificating on the part of the literary critics can ultimately change or conceal the fact that different people may use SF in different ways.

It is interesting to note that although the progressive development of media along the path mapped herein has tended to the ever-greater dissociation of sender and recipient, there has been a

reversal of this trend by SF readers and writers. SF has developed a distinct "community", which puts its information organisers (writers), transmitter (editors and publishers) and recipients (readers) in closer contact than the participants in any other print-descended medium. This community has been called a "ghetto" and has been heavily criticised for inhibiting the development of science fiction. Certainly it has helped to remove the medium from the literary mainstream. But I wonder whether this is altogether a bad thing.

Finally, I should like to reiterate a point I made in my earlier article. It is not difficult, in the social climate of the present day, to discover a need for tools which train perception in the manner of SF. The acceleration of change in the twentieth century has made it clear that "the future" is no longer something our grandchildren will have to live with. It will arrive while we are still around to experience it. We cannot afford to remain wilfully blind to the possibilities of the present. Ever since the atom bomb (or, more accurately, ever since the atom bomb was seen to be coming) all men are not only mortal, but *exterminable*. We all stand to be immediately affected by the decisions and actions of other men. In a global village, there is no place to hide.

We can no longer take the future for granted.

(cont. on page 63)

MANHATTAN SQUARE DANCE

The Story Behind the Story: in 1964 your editor and Calvin Demmon—whose stories were then appearing frequently in The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction—decided to collaborate on a story. The story was written, submitted to a few editors (whose comments boiled down to “Well-written, but I don’t understand it”), and then cannibalized (with considerable rewriting) for use in the editor’s Ace novel, Android Avenger, after which the story disappeared into the editor’s files. Recently, in the process of searching for something else entirely, the editor found the story and reread it with considerable curiosity. To his surprise, it held up well. Although written well before the growth of the present counter-culture and a decade before the energy crisis, it forecast both—and more besides. No pretense is offered that this is a newly-written story, and no updating has been done. . .

TED WHITE & CALVIN DEMMON

Illustrated by RICHARD OLSEN

“I’M AFRAID to ride the subway,” she said. “Nobody’s on them any more—only the Bleeckers.”

His back to her, Claude Estes stared down out of his office window at the deserted rush-hour streets. A battered cab cruised down Wall Street with its overhead light on, and two men ran toward it from across the street. Another man and two women from below reached the cab first. While they argued several more people converged on the cab, and shortly it was slipping away, back-seat full, while the original

would-be passengers still stood on the street, arguing.

The street was again empty of traffic.

“Claude,” said Peggy Wind, “Did you hear me? I’m quitting. I’m leaving this Firday.”

“Well, it had to happen,” Claude sighed and turned to face her. “I suppose you’ll be finding something closer to home?”

“Yes. Commuting’s been really impossible ever since Ben and I moved out of the city. It takes me three hours to get to work, three more to get home, and when you add six hours on the trains and

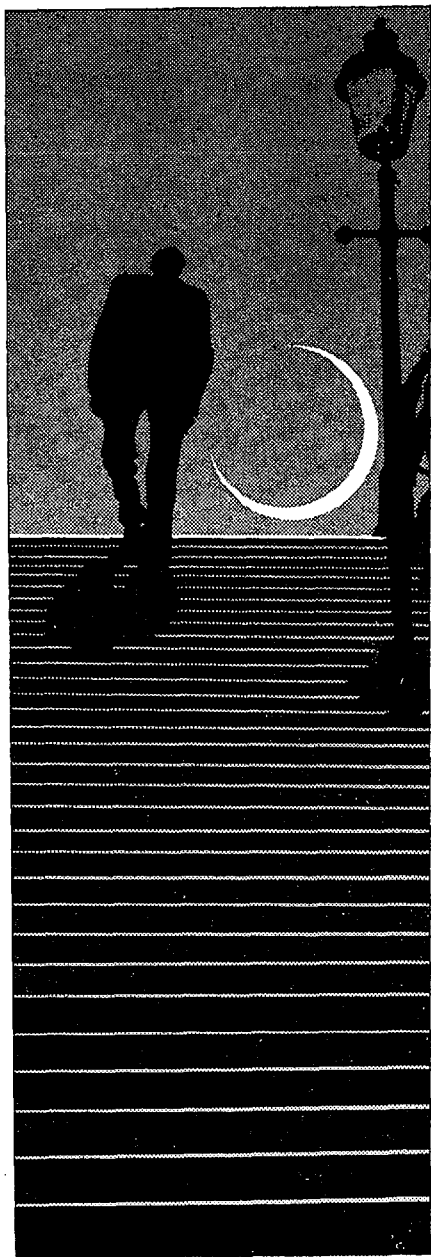
the subway to a five-hour work day, it's too much. And the subway was stalled again today. I shudder every time I have to go down into one of those dirty things. There's always a Bleecker sitting next to you, filthy and smelling. *Today*—today I was cooped up for almost an hour in a car full of them."

"I know. I took a cab to work. Cost me twenty bucks. But it was worth it. You're right—almost nobody rides the subways any more; that's why there's no more express service and the cars are never clean. Except for the Bleeckers, I mean, and most of them seem to *live* down there. They don't care how fast the trains run. Why should they? They're just riding back and forth; they're not going anywhere."

"Claude, why do *you* bother? Why do you live in the city? Why don't you quit and move out into the suburbs? The air is clean out there, and things are new."

"I don't know, Peggy," he said, shrugging and sitting heavily in his antique plush leather chair. He tapped his fingers nervously on the mahogany of his desk—like the chair, Carstairs' desk, before he'd been killed. "I guess it's because I just don't want to give up. . . ."

He leaned forward. "There used to be over eight million people here, Peggy. This city *swarmed*. I can remember when I was just a kid working in the Exchange, the sidewalks were



packed with people, the subways were jammed; they even closed some of the streets to cars during lunch hours so that people would have room, walking. I can't help thinking that it's the fault of everybody who's given up—everybody who's moved out and left it all to the Bleeckers—that the city is falling apart at the seams. It's a deserted slum."

"A Bleecker is running for mayor next month." She sat down on the edge of his desk.

"Yes. I suppose that will finish it, if he wins. But Peggy, I've got a house—a whole house, which was once three separate luxury apartments, and before that a town house—up in the east Seventies, for practically nothing, and I'm living in a city which still has a lot to offer. You don't even have anything to give up there, because the suburbs—well, you know what I'm talking about. You've lived there for a month now."

"I like the suburbs, Claude. I think you're just afraid to move; I think you're stuck here by your own inertia. You're afraid to give up something you know for something you don't. I—oh, damn!" She glanced quickly at her watch. "I'll miss the 3:50 IRT if I don't hurry. See you tomorrow!" She ran quickly out of the office.

Claude Estes was a tall man, black hair topping a dark sombre face, with no trace of the forty-five years he'd lived here in the dying city showing in his hair.

Most of his contemporaries in the suburbs, he thought wryly to himself, were streaking with grey already. It was a small point of pride with him.

But it was true, what Peggy had said. The suburbs were hardly as featureless as they once had been. Now businesses were locating in underdeveloped areas, creating parks and suburban developments around them, and bringing in "Cultural Centers." And the people were responsive. Who wouldn't prefer a big backyard for his kids, a community playground, and modern schools, to the creeping slums of the city, the condemned buildings, the parks too dangerous to cross even during the brightest hours of day? And with businesses moving into the suburbs themselves, the long hours of commuting once required were no longer necessary.

Only a few businesses stayed in the city, among them the ultra-conservative financial houses still operating from Manhattan's lower tip. But every year the buildings grew emptier, offices shrank in size until they disappeared, and employees slowly migrated elsewhere. Like Peggy.

Peggy had been his secretary for three years, and in that time he'd come to consider her a part of his life.

Margaret would have been insanely jealous, he knew, if she'd known the extent of his feelings for his secretary, but she had never noticed when his attentions

towards her had grown perfunctory and sporadic; she had been too bound up in herself to be aware of him as a human being. She wanted to dust the furniture, she wanted to invite Jo Anne and Lester over to play cards, she wanted to buy a new quick-freeze; that was why he had first become interested in Peggy.

But, of course, there had never been anything overt between Peggy and him. She had come into the office a sparkling newlywed, talking constantly of her Ben, and he had found it enough to absorb her presence, her warm enthusiastic personality, and to develop a close but platonic relationship with her over the past three years.

And now she was leaving. He wasn't surprised. He'd been expecting it since Ben had gotten his new job with Polypharmaceuticals up in Westchester a month ago.

THE ELEVATOR STOPPED on the third floor again, and he had to walk down to the first. It had been doing this for two weeks. By now he'd given up hoping somebody would fix it.

The air was dark and grey when he stepped out of the building. It was only 4:30, but the days were short now, and a deadness hung over the city. Winter wasn't really cold anymore, even when Central Heating went out—as it did about every other day. No, winter just robbed the city of its color. He

moved quickly to the illuminated cabstand in front of the office building. He was fortunate; a taxi pulled up within fifteen minutes.

The gears of the old '89 Plymouth whined painfully as he gave his address and they pulled away from the curb.

"The subways are tied up again," he said to the driver, but the driver just snorted. They rode for twenty blocks in silence.

A few scattered streetlights were on behind them, but ahead was Bleecker territory. It looked gloomy and forbidding. Whoever had come up with the name was right, Claude thought; the lives these people lived, jobless and usually homeless, were bleak, and their parts of the city were bleaker.

They were heading up Sixth Avenue when it happened.

There was a muffled report, and suddenly the car was jouncing wildly on the cobblestones and careening madly from side to side as the driver fought to control it. Finally they wobbled to a stop.

"Goddamn Bleekers!" shouted the driver. He leaned over and yanked a heavy revolver from the hanger beside the glove compartment. "A trap," he said bitterly to Estes. "Didn't see it in time. Board with nails in it. You got a gun?"

Claude opened his mouth to answer and a stone smashed through the bubble top, showering him with fragments of tempered glass. He had no gun. He

had nothing at all.

The driver climbed from the front seat and began firing at the figures who were closing in on the car now. Immediately they regrouped and turned on him. A stone hit the driver in his back, and he whirled to fire. He was pulled down from behind. They were all over him.

Claude slipped out of the back door of the cab and began sprinting across the avenue to the cover of one of the sidestreets. As he ran he glanced back over his shoulder. None were following him. Half a dozen figures were clustered around the huddled shape of the driver, and he could hear them laughing.

Boys; a kid gang; *Bleeckers*. He was glad he'd escaped their notice. They were probably after the driver's money-belt. The driver should've stayed with the car, should've known better. He ran through the streets until his breath caught desperately at his throat and a stabbing pain in his side brought him to a halt.

He was at a corner, under a streetsign. One of the frames stared emptily back at him, but the other said

Bleecker St.

CHRISTOPHER STREET

and as he stared at it, breathing heavily, he shivered.

Bleecker Street! The center of the Bleecker world! The area from which the Bleeckers had come, slowly spreading east, decades ago, and then progressing, like a

slow disease, uptown and downtown. Up along the west, down along the east, assimilating and devouring already blighted areas, blending indistinguishably with the Bowery and lower east side and Spanish Harlem and upper Harlem. Now he was standing, staring upwards at the sign which marked the very center, the center of a whirlpool turning him dizzily and turning him dizzily and—

He staggered, broke, and ran for the nearest building.

It was an ancient building, probably close to two-hundred years old, a tenement with two narrow glass-paneled doors which opened inwards at the center, into a shabbily tiled hall long ago covered over with grime and soot until the pattern of the tiles underfoot was buried under layers of ground-in filth. A door was open directly down the hall, and through it he caught a glimpse of a warmly lit room. Could it be—? Could there be *people*, living here among the Bleeckers? He walked down the hall and rapped, a little timidly, at the door frame.

A neatly dressed young man got up from an easy chair which Claude had overlooked—its back had been to him—and came around it to the door.

The man looked Claude up and down appraisingly. It was obvious that he knew Claude was not a native of the neighborhood.

"I'm sorry to bother you," said Claude, "but the cab I was in was

attacked, and—I was wondering if I might use your phone.”

The man nodded, turned, and Claude followed him into the apartment.

The room was a livingroom, obviously, although along one side was a long table made up, as nearly as he could see, of long boards laid on sawhorses, covered with different sizes and patterns of table-cloths. But with the exception of that long table, the room was furnished quite comfortably. There were several overstuffed easy chairs, two sofas, several small end-tables and three floorlamps scattered easily over the large room, and underfoot was a rich brown carpet. The effect, aided and abetted by the warm beige color scheme, was one of a comfortable club room.

“Bill,” yelled the young man. “Bill, here’s a fella who wants to use the telephone.”

“Haw!” came a voice from the rear of the building. “Well, just a minute. We’ll try it.”

A moment later a man entered the room from the unlit hallway which stretched back to another gleam of light. This was Bill, Claude guessed. The man looked about forty, and must have weighed at least 250 pounds. But he was so tall that he did not look fat. Instead, as his shoulder brushed the doorframe and he walked in, he seemed simply, overwhelmingly *big*. Behind him, as he stepped to one side, was a young blonde girl, not older than

twenty. She seemed delicate and fragile beside Bill, and her long blonde hair fell over her shoulder and down over her high young breasts almost to her waist.

“Want to use the phone, eh?” said the big man. He walked over to a cabinet and reached into it. “I don’t know whether it still works or not. Haven’t tried it for quite a while.” He set something down on the top of the cabinet with his other hand, and Claude realized with a start that the man had been carrying a glass in his hand the entire time. He had not noticed it until the huge hand had unfolded from around it.

The man had removed something from the cabinet, and Claude could see that it was a telephone handset, made of heavy brown plastic with a small dialing mechanism on its back, the sort linemen used, dangling two long wires which ended in alligator clips.

Bill strode across the room to a radiator near a window and squatted down heavily. His body blocked what he was doing and it was not until he stood again that Claude could see the clips now attached to a small box at the baseboard.

“An old line the company never disconnected,” Bill explained. “They usually don’t disconnect old lines anymore, since nobody lives around here anyway.” He listened for a moment. “Well, we’ve still got a dial tone.” He handed the handset to Claude and indicated

the small dial on the back. "Dial your number with this."

Claude fingered the dial and its small projections gingerly, then carefully dialed his own number. There was a long pause, a sharp sound which rose and fell, and silence. He tried again, with the same results.

"Nope," said Bill. "I guess it doesn't work any more." He yanked the clips loose and gave the phone to the younger man, who returned it to the cabinet.

Claude could see nothing through the window over the radiator; only a dim reflection of himself. It was dark outside. Not the dark of streetlights and neon signs and headlamps, but the dark of a desert, the darkness of a deserted city. He did not want to go back out there, not tonight.

"Uh," he said, "I, umm, seem to be stranded here, sort of. I wonder if you could—that is, do you have some place where I could spend the night, perhaps?" The strangeness of what had happened today and was happening now cowed him; there was nothing in his previous experience he could relate any of it to. He felt a small rivulet of sweat run down his back.

"Sure," said the big man.

The girl spoke up. "You can use my bed," she said.

"Have you eaten?" asked the younger man.

Claude hadn't eaten since morning—he had given up noon-time coffee breaks when they'd burned out the coffee shop across

the street from the office. He *was* hungry, and, now that he thought about it, he could smell food cooking somewhere in the apartment. It made him hungrier. He shook his head.

"Good," said the girl. "You're just in time for dinner." She nodded at the long table. "We'll have it on in fifteen minutes or so."

THE GIRL with the long blond hair, he discovered, was named Sylvie, and he could hardly take his eyes from her as she sat across from him, eating and talking to the others at the table. There was a pixie, gamin quality to her—to the way she held her head and smiled and her eyes, sparkling, danced happily about.

It was easy to see why there was such a long table; its length was now filled with men and women who had made their way noisily in through the open doors shortly after the table had been set, almost as if an unseen bell had sounded.

They were a curious people: boisterous, laughing, always talking volubly even with their mouths full, quenching an apparently endless thirst with oft-refilled glasses of red wine, and so alive that Claude could not understand their presence, here in the heart of the Bleeker territory. It appeared that they were the entire population of the building, a vast sprawling family group which congregated here at this long table for meals and socializing. He felt alien, very much an

outsider, here among comradeship, and stared often over his food—a casserole dish consisting of rice, meat, and many vegetables dished from one huge pot—at the vivacious girl who'd offered him her bed.

"There's an old house on Baxter Street we could use—"

"I was up on the Brooklyn Bridge today with Miri! Beautiful, beautiful—"

"—but what I think we should do, we should shuck the whole scene and strike for the woods. Nature, that's where—"

"Have you been 'out in the woods' lately? Aren't any woods."

"Big fire over on Hudson Street; got a whole block. . ."

"Really? When? Was Condit still living over there?"

The meal had drawn to a close when a man spoke from down at the other end of the table, and silence dropped over the others. "I'm going to take the subway today."

Claude started to say that they were stalled again, but stopped the words in his throat. There had been an undertone of deeper significance in what the man had said. He turned to follow the others' stare at the man who'd spoken.

He was thin and wiry; his face seemed at first lopsided because his nose had been broken, and was now bent to one side. Short black curly hair topped a face dominated by penetrating eyes, one eyebrow slightly higher than the other.

Sylvie broke the silence first. "Richard—Good luck."

Big Bill rose from his position at the near end of the table and walked to the bookcase on the opposite side of the room. Carefully he removed a thick, leather-bound book, and returned with it to the table. Unsmiling, he handed it silently to the man at his right. That man took it, clasped it for a moment, then passed it without a word, to the man facing him across the table. This man did the same, holding it for a few moments, then passing it to the girl at his left, who in turn again passed it across the table. Slowly the book made its way back and forth across the long table, passed from hand to silent hand, until it reached Sylvie, across from Claude. She hesitated for a moment, and then with a smile passed it across the table to him.

He stared down at the book. Lettered in gold leaf across the front was

The Pledge of Peace and Brotherhood

by Raydell Nelson

He wanted to open it, to find out at least briefly what was inside, but he checked the urge and passed it on, putting it into the hands of the woman beside him.

At last the book reached the man at the end of the table. He accepted it and placed it on the table before him. Bill stood, and as he stood the others stood, Claude rising with them.

"Richard Wingate," intoned the large man, his words directed to the thin wiry man who still sat at the foot of the table, eyes closed, his hands raised to join those of the others, "We give you strength. We give you peace. We give you brotherhood. Go, and find yourself."

There seemed to be a tangible force in the air. Claude could feel it in the grasp of the man and woman on each side of him, he could sense the linking of wills and common purpose of these people, the warmth and strength of love they directed to the seated man at the foot of the table. It was a ritual, a circuit of empathetic communion, of which he was accidentally a part. It seemed to him that he too was joined in this benediction, that he too was a recipient of their strength, peace and brotherhood. The feeling was unlike anything he had known before.

Then hands were parted, Wingate had risen, and those nearest him were laughing and clapping him on the back. Animated conversation again sprang up, and once more Claude felt empty, alone.

"Hey!" shouted a fat bearded young man. "Hey, we can't let Richard go without a sendoff! We've got to swing him out!"

"You're right," said Big Bill, and he wove his way, beaming, to a hifi console built into the bookshelves.

"Something religious, you know?" said the bearded man.

"Something like—that's it!" He nodded vigorously at the record album the other had produced. "Mingus!" he shouted. "Yeah, Bill, *Ecclusiastics*, that's it!"

The album was ancient, as were the hifi components, Claude realized. He could glimpse real *tubes* in the system. In fact, despite the dirty grey tattered sleeve of the album, he could imagine that such a record would bring a good price on the rarities market. Automatic tape cassetts had long ago displaced the archaic grooved record and mechanical sound pickup, and when the record was put on the turntable it was easy to understand why. Before a bar of music could be heard there was a series of loud pops and scratches, and then, accompanied by a distinct hiss that bespoke the many times the record had been played in the last several decades, a badly distorted piano began to clamor.

Enraptured, the others in the room fell silent, first listening, then swaying, with the rhythmic music. Claude heard a strangely paraphrased church-like theme, played by saxophones sounding in their unusual harmonies like a wheezy parlor organ he'd once played as a child in his great-grandmother's living-room. It was jazz, but a fervent sort of darkly pungent jazz he'd never heard before. It bore faint resemblance to the popular atonal and intellectualized forms of the day, and, unlike all the jazz he'd heard before, it caught him up in

its emotional rise and swell, building him for the shocking moment when a hoarse voice began to chant from one of the speakers, "Oh yeah! Oh yeah, Jesus—I know."

And answering back from the swaying people came the response:

"We know, oh Lord, we know!"

What was *happening*? He felt himself once again a part of the group *gestalt*, his personality—all the years of grey existence in a dying world of *things* and *objects*—all submerged in this chanting, rhythmic congregation. The voice gave way to the piano again, then to a nakedly probing saxophone which spoke a sermon with its own voice. It was without conscious volition that he found himself clapping, chanting with the others, swaying in perfect time to the powerful rhythms.

There was the same sharp sense of separation when the music ended that he'd felt at the table. He was returned to his own self and alone in a roomful of strangers. The music had ended, the spell was broken. "Oh yeah!" had screamed the voice of the record, and then, as the final chords died away, "Umhummm."

HE STOOD UNCERTAINLY by one wall of the room, watching as the people slowly made their exit. He felt someone at his side, and he turned. It was Sylvie.

"Tired? You look all in."

"Umm, yes. Could you, umm, show me where I'm to sleep?"

"I'll show you. I think I'll go to bed too, as a matter of fact," she said. She led him from the room down the dark hall, turning before she reached the kitchen at its end, and into a darkened room. When she flipped the light switch, he saw that it was a small bedroom, almost filled by the double-bed, dresser and chair it contained. He stood uncomfortably close to her in the small space left; and was relieved when she excused herself and went out, closing the door behind her.

He removed his outer clothes and draped them carefully, neatly, over the back of the chair, clicked off the light and climbed into the bed.

He was tired; he realized suddenly that sheer nervous tension alone had carried him this far, and now that he was lying in a dark bed, which, if he tried, he could imagine was his own (but it smelled *different*, perfumed with a subtle femininity never captured in any of the stuff Margaret splashed behind her ears); now that he could relax he felt the tension draining, slipping gently away into sleep.

Then the door opened again. A soft glow reflected down the hall beyond, outlining Sylvie as she moved cat-softly into the room. She left the door open as she slipped from her clothes in the dim light, then shut it before joining him in the bed.

He no longer felt sleepy.

THE AWAKENING was delicious. He savored it for many long moments. When had he last awakened to see another sleeping beside him? How many years since he and Margaret had moved into separate bedrooms, and before that into separate beds? The sleeping face on the pillow next to him looked incredibly childlike, a soft happy smile framed by disordered golden hair.

He pictured himself at his desk in the office, mechanically going over the accounts, no more alive than the can which brought his mail each morning. "How can this have happened to me?" he wondered.

Sylvie opened one eye and looked at him. Then she opened the other and smiled, snuggling up against him. He felt the smooth skin of her young body against his own, and a thought struck him suddenly: *She's young enough to be my own daughter!* An awkward embarrassment fell over him.

He followed her mechanically from the bed and began to dress, his eyes surveying her covertly as she dressed beside him. He felt an urge to cover himself, and her slow grace made him feel the sharp accent of his own nervous awkwardness. He was all thumbs. He zipped his shirt into his fly twice, and then tore it, ripping it loose. And his knees buckled weakly as he sat again on the bed

to seal his shoes.

He did not regain his composure until they sat across a small table in the kitchen, coffee cups steaming between them, bacon sizzling on the stove.

"What kind of place is this?" he asked. "You seem to have a sort of island community here."

"Well, sort of. We're an Agape of the Church of the Brotherhood of the Way," she replied. "There are many, scattered through the neighborhood, and we often have larger get-togethers. But each building is kind of an independant co-op sort of thing."

"Oh? There are more of you? That's surprising. I wouldn't have imagined there'd be even as many people as were here last night, all living here in Bleecker territory. How—?"

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Who do you think lives in Bleecker territory?"

"Why, uh, the Bleeckers, of course."

"The Bleeckers? We're the Bleeckers."

He stared at her, a knife turning slowly in his stomach. "Not you. You're not—"

"Of course we are. We're Bleeckers. We're *the* Bleeckers. Who did you think we were? What do you think Bleeckers are?"

"But—" he faltered, totally lost. "But, the Bleeckers—they're filthy, disease ridden, uhh, bums and—they're the dregs, the dregs of society. Bleeckers are the ones

who don't work, the outcasts, the beggars, the outlaws—" He gestured around him, nearly knocking over the coffee. "This place—you're not like that."

"No, of course not. Who ever told you such things?" She looked at him curiously, her eyes large and sad.

"Everyone knows. The Bleekers—once they were the beatniks, the hippies, the criminals, the alcoholics, Bowery bums, dope addicts—they gathered in these slums, and now most of the city's been abandoned to them. But. . .but—"

"I'm sorry, Claude. I'm very sorry," Sylvie said. She placed her hand over his. "It just isn't true. It was never true. If some people believe that it's only because they've chosen to ignore their own part in what's really happened." She suddenly became intense. "Who do you think keeps this city running? The know-nothings who live uptown and try to forget the rest of us exist? The drudges who've forgotten culture and art, who've forgotten how to enjoy it and who've forgotten the people who make it, and dream of going home each night to their sterile homes in the suburbs? Who do you think writes what little they allow in their 'Culture Centers'? Who paints? Who composes? Who—"

"But. . ."

"We do! We're the only ones who haven't retreated into our dead shells and forgotten what liv-

ing is about. We, the Bleekers, the *live* people. We're the actors, poets, writers, composers, and painters, the bohemians, the gifted ones who always provided inspiration for our society and culture, the ones they always ignored, slinging us their cast-offs, leaving us their slums to live in because they'd give us next to no livelihood at all. And we're the ones who've taken over as they, the 'straights'—the dead people who take such pride in the cogs of machinery they live and die for—as they have abandoned the city. When the population dropped, and landlords went begging with their ridiculous rents, the straights deserted the shabbier parts of the city" (Claude felt his face flush) "deserted them for the status of the suburbs, leaving it all for the rats and the roaches—and for us. We're squatters. We don't pay rent to anybody. And we're all that keep these buildings from falling apart. We're the only ones who care enough to maintain the city. We work; we work for each other. We don't do meaningless things with meaningless symbols. We don't play with bits of paper." Scorn filled her tight voice. "We *live*."

Her face softened; she drew a deep breath, then relaxed. She was once more a beautiful young girl. "Don't you feel it? Didn't you feel it—in the gathering last night? And—"

He remembered. He remembered the strange communion,

the warmth of life shared freely, the unspoken love expressed by these people. He remembered the way he had been caught up in the emotional tide, and he remembered the music, the primal ecstasy of the long-dead jazzman's fiery gospel. He remembered. . .

"Do you—I suppose you, you always sleep with, um, whoever comes around here?" He also remembered, a sudden pang, that she had a double bed.

She smiled. "It was *fun*, wasn't it?" There was only happiness in her voice.

Suddenly he was completely aware of what he had stumbled into.

He'd been wrong, all wrong; they'd all been wrong. The Bleekers were not at all as he had imagined them. In his own futile strivings he had been unable to imagine people who did not strive at all, who rejected his goals, who had found a wholly new way of expressing themselves, who had directed their lives towards a far more meaningful form of happiness. Theirs was a happiness grown not out of performing meaningless chores to soulless perfection, but rather a happiness of doing things which were in themselves rewarding—of building, growing, loving, living. He was caught up in the vision and almost a part of it when Sylvie spoke again.

"The trouble with you is that you never come into contact with us, you others. You see some of

us riding the subways, meditating, feeling out the city—like Richard; he's out there now, riding—and you look no further. You're afraid to. You shrink from us from what you imagine we must be, and from the opportunity to learn better—you shrink away, because your lives are so sterile, so futile, and you *know* it, but you're afraid of knowing it. You are afraid to question yourselves. There are derelicts, too, of course, and kid gangs and all the rest. The bottom fringes are still here; we keep the subways running mostly so that those who have no other place can find some warmth and light. But the derelicts have been with society from the very beginning, and most of the bad ones, the gangs, aren't ours. They're yours, the children of your kind of people, who roam wild and unnoticed by you. They—"

"They seem to have left a mess in the street," said a new voice, and Claude turned in his chair, startled, to see Big Bill looming in the doorway. Bill nodded. "Morning, Claude." He pulled a chair from the corner of the kitchen and straddled it, his bulk suddenly making the chair seem very fragile. "We found your taxi—and the driver. Not a very pretty sight."

"The driver was he—?"

"Sure. And the car was stripped. They took everything they could get loose." He shook his head sadly, and it occurred to

Claude that Bill seemed more disturbed over the fate of the car than that of the driver.

"Well—" Claude said, sliding his chair slowly back from the table, "Well, I guess I'd better get going. My wife is probably wondering. . ." It was the first he'd thought of his wife in many hours, and somehow her concern did not seem very real to him, or very important. The entire world she represented seemed far off and vaguely alien; he could not summon an emotional response to that world any longer. It was flat, grey, and tasteless.

"Yeah," said Bill. He drank the coffee Sylvie had quietly put before him, downing it in four big gulps. "Time for me to get back outside. Want me to walk you to the subway? They're running again."

"Okay," said Claude. He stood, hesitated, and let Bill leave the room ahead of him. He turned.

"Sylvie. . ."

"Claude, you'll be coming back, won't you?" It was not really a question.

He put his hands on her shoulders, and she stood and moved towards him. His arms fell around her, holding her in a close embrace. His lips found hers, he felt the warmth of her body pressing against him, and he kissed her, awkwardly, as if he had never held or kissed a girl before. It was a wordless communion, a vibration shared, a fusion of two bodies into one sweet emotion.

"I've got to go now," he said.

"You're one of us," she said, still holding him. "You felt it, didn't you?"

"Yes," he said. "I did."

"It's not too late," she said. "Come back, Claude. Remember to come back to us."

THE SUNLIGHT was thin and deeply yellowed; the city bathed in its light and the air crumbling brown at the edges. Their steps echoed hollowly. There were no other sounds. There were no vehicles moving on the narrow Village streets, and none parked at the curbs.

"Cars mean gas, and that's hard to come by," explained Big Bill. "Most of us have cars tucked away, in abandoned garages or like that, and we keep them for special occasions." He snorted. "If we left them on the street they'd be gone the next morning."

"Why? Who'd take them?"

"Look, Estes, this is an operating anarchy we've got here. Controlled chaos, you might say. By common agreement certain things are taken care of—" he pointed ahead a block to a big intersection where subway entrances could just be seen "—like the subways. But here at home it's shift for yourself."

"I don't understand. I thought you had a sort of a—a community thing going. Last night—"

"Sure, last night. And we took you in too, no questions asked. That's us, that's our way." He

laughed, and Claude realized he'd made an unintentional pun. "But we're not the only ones in the neighborhood. Everybody has a right to live his own life here, and most of us do. Some of us have gotten together, usually as complete buildings, into groups that work together. And some of us are members of the Church of the Brotherhood of the Way. But there are plenty who aren't, who go their own ways. That's freedom."

"But—you say if you left your car out they'd steal it. That doesn't seem right."

"I didn't say that. I don't even have a car. But if I wanted one, and saw it on the street after dark, I'd take it—if I could. Things you see left out after dark are up for grabs. Whoever wants, gets. That's always been the way here. You don't want something, you put it out. Somebody else can probably use it, and if they can they'll take it. Everybody knows this. That's why they keep their cars in garages. Besides, there's always the gangs that come down from uptown. They don't usually steal cars, but they like to smash them up, break things up."

"That gang that got my taxi last night. Was that—?"

"Who'd they go for? The driver, right?"

"Yeah. How did you—?"

"They went for his money, right?"

"Yeah."

"We don't use money down

here. You can always tell it's one of those kid gangs when they go for the money. They're big for money. That's the kind of values they've got, because that's the kind of values their parents have. They figure if they pull their stunts down here no one will stop them, and we'll get the blame." He shrugged. "They're right."

They started across the wide avenue to the uptown subway entrance.

"Well, why *do* you let them get away with it?" Claude asked, slightly irritated at the big man's equanimity.

"We're not cops. We—look out!"

Tires hummed on the cobblestone pavement. A taxi was barreling down the avenue, heading straight for them. The driver must have seen them, but he made no attempt to swerve. Bill leaped forward, and, grabbing Claude by the arm, he yanked him toward the low curb.

The big man moved fast for his size, very fast indeed. Claude stumbled, his foot slipping on the irregular stones, and a stab of pain shot up from his right ankle. He pitched forward, and only the other's mammoth grip on his arm saved him from falling in front of the speeding car.

Then, suddenly, the car was past, and as Claude pulled himself shakily to his feet he watched it disappear down the avenue.

Behind him there was the sound of another car, and Bill

said, "Come on; no time for day-dreaming now!" Hobbling, Claude hurried to the curb, just in time to see another taxi rocket by.

"We shouldn't have been talking," Bill said.

"He damned near killed us!" said Claude, his face pale and sweating.

"Sure. Well, what do you expect? At the speed he's going, a swerve on these bricks would crack him up for sure. You just have to watch out, that's all."

Claude glanced up at the traffic light on a nearby corner. It was dark. Bill's eyes followed his gaze, and he said, quietly, "It doesn't work. They never stop around here."

Claude limped to the stairs which descended into the subway station.

"Can you make it?" asked Bill. "I'd better come down with you."

As they approached the turnstiles, Claude began to fumble in his pockets for a token. The change booth was boarded up and empty.

"Don't worry about that," said Bill. "No one pays. I doubt the things even work any more. Just climb over." He helped Claude over one of the turnstiles.

"Do the trains still stop here?" Claude asked. His answer was the hiss and squeal of brakes as a train pulled into the station.

AN HOUR LATER he was hobbling up the street to his house. He'd had a lot of time to think

while he sat silently in the subway car. He'd stared with fresh interest at the other riders. It was Saturday; there were no commuters on the train, so the other occupants had to be Bleeckers.

Some of them were the ones he'd always seen: the bums, homeless and destitute, who had stolen into the vast system to ride up and down endlessly, making great circuits of the vast underground system while they slept or stared vacantly into a personal subspace which contained only shattered lives, emptiness.

But there were others, at first quite similar in appearance, but differing subtly in attitude. These were the real Bleeckers, he realized, the ones who, like the man who'd made his strange announcement at the dinner table the night before, were searching for something within themselves and had chosen this strange environment as the vehicle for their search. They too stared with unseeing eyes—although sometimes Claude felt their stare fall watchfully on him when his head was turned—but there was no defeat in them; their bodies had not slumped in resignation to the desolation which had found the others. He wondered why he had never noticed this about them before, why he had never before seen the difference in these two kinds of shabbily clothed men. He looked around for Wingate, but did not see him.

At 34th Street some uptown

people boarded the train. Three of the shoppers, carrying their still-bright shopping bags from Macy's, the last surviving midtown department store, entered his car and seated themselves opposite him. He transferred his attention to them.

They were a young couple with an older woman, obviously a mother-in-law, who favored Claude with a suspicious look before her face settled into the blankness which had already congealed over the faces of the other two. Claude was startled at the hostility which had shown in the woman's face, and he suddenly realized that he hadn't combed his hair or shaved, and that he hadn't replaced his tie when he'd dressed.

"I look like a Bleecker," he thought.

Once or twice, during the short time it took to reach the next stop, at 42nd Street, one of the shoppers across from him turned and said something to one of the others, but totally without animation, and without receiving more than a nod or grunt in response. Their eyes were as unseeing, Claude realized, as those of the others in the car. It was as though they had shut themselves off, awaiting re-activation upon their exit from the train. He left them in their trances as he changed at 42nd Street for the shuttle to Grand Central.

The riders on the east side line were the same. He'd searched

almost desperately for some sign among the uptown riders; a sign of liveliness, of awareness and response to their surroundings. He found none. And then he realized why the Bleeckers rode the trains to be alone.

It felt good to be out in the pale warmth of the sun again, and he hardly noticed the stabbing pains in his already swelling ankle as he mounted the steps to the front door of his house.

He was fumbling for his key when the door opened, Margaret behind it.

"I don't suppose you cared about us," she said without preamble, as Claude faced her on the steps with his key in his hand. "I don't suppose you cared enough to phone—"

He stared at her, at her stranger's face, old and tired before its time—yes, dead—mouthing words whose meaning he understood but which he did not hear. Her perfume, an odor which he realized, for the first time, smelled more like an antiseptic than anything else, caught in his nostrils. His nose twitched involuntarily. He reached for the door, and was about to pull it closed again, to turn his back and walk down the steps, when a small girl appeared behind his wife.

"Daddy! You're back! Daddy's back!" she called to the house behind her, "Daddy's back!"

He sighed, and let his hand drop.

"Yes, Margaret," he said, pushing his way past her into the house. "I cared. I couldn't reach you; there wasn't any phone where I stayed last night. The taxi was stopped—the driver was killed." He limped into the living room, and turned to face her as she followed him through the arch. "I could have been killed too."

"The *Bleeckers*," said his wife, horror wiping the anger from her face. He wondered if the horror was for him, or for the paycheck she would lose if something happened to him. It didn't matter. She slipped into the back of his mind and he smiled down at the small figure tugging at his pants legs.

"Carol," he said, "How would you like to live in a house with a yard all around it, a yard of your

own, that you could play in?" He looked up again at his wife, and, having found her, stopped seeing her. "I've been thinking," he said, his voice echoing deeply inside himself. "I've been thinking—the city isn't a place to bring up children anymore. It's time we moved out, out into a healthier environment, out of the city."

He tried desperately to shut out the golden-haired image which swam through his mind. He looked down at his daughter, trying not to see beneath *her* golden hair another face, trying to blot it with the memory of his brush with violence and near death. He reached down to the child, and said with a quiver only he could feel, "Carol, won't that be nice? Won't that be nice?"

—TED WHITE &
CALVIN DEMMON

SF: The Nature of the Medium (cont. from page 45)

Notes.

(1) It would be very interesting to find out whether SF readers tend, on average, to read faster than readers who avoid SF—and also whether they tend to read SF faster than they read "mainstream" material. I suspect this may be so. It may be significant,

with respect to this point, that the long novel (100,000 words plus) is a rarity in SF.

(2) Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast*, London, Rapp & Whiting, p. 99 (published in the United States by Harcourt, Brace & World Inc).

—BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

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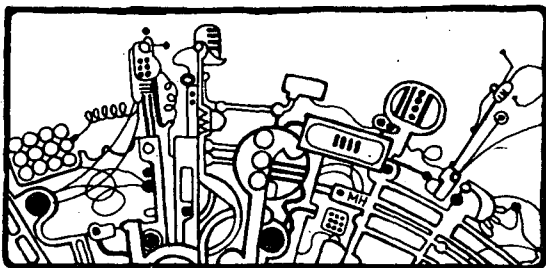
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**...in Science
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LIFE ON THE MOONS

MUCH OF WHAT we have learned about the solar system from our space program is reflected in our pictures of planetary atmospheres. We now know that Venus is cloaked in hot, dense clouds of carbon dioxide. Mars retains only thin wisps of this gas and perhaps some water vapor. But there is a small, inconspicuous body in the solar system which has an atmosphere perhaps more interesting than any of these—Titan, the largest moon of Saturn.

In 1944 G. P. Kuiper studied sunlight reflected by Titan and found two frequencies in this light were absorbed upon reflection. These frequencies were two which methane gas absorbs efficiently. For a quarter of a century more, this was nearly all that was known about the atmosphere of Titan. In the last few years however, attention has focused on this distant satellite, twice as large as our moon in volume with about half the mass of the planet Mercury. Saturn is more than nine times further than the sun

than the Earth, so one would think Titan should be cold (about -200 degrees C.). But detailed study of Titan's infrared emissions shows it to be much warmer—at least -128 degrees C. Even more surprisingly, we now have a measurement of the surface pressure—a startling 0.4 Earth atmospheres. Thus a satellite with only 1.9 our moon's mass has a surface pressure hundreds of times greater than that on Mars.

Titan is now emerging as one of the most intriguing mysteries in the solar system. An important key may be the simple fact that this moon is much further from the sun than our own, so we can expect the warming influence of sunlight to have played a different role in the evolution of any possible atmosphere.

Near the top of an atmosphere a high-velocity molecule moving directly upward has a good chance of escaping. For a given temperature the lightest molecules escape most readily. Thus, hydrogen, helium, carbon dioxide and other relatively light

gases should rapidly diffuse away from less massive objects such as Titan. Relatively heavy gases such as methane, nitrogen and ammonia may cling to large moons, however, and provide a relatively thick atmosphere. What matters is the temperature at the top of the atmosphere, which is determined mostly by the amount of sunlight falling upon it. The temperature of the lower atmosphere may be considerably different, a fact with important implications.

A reasonable explanation of Titan's warmth seems to be that a greenhouse effect operates there, trapping the sun's heat. This process begins when visible light passes through the atmosphere and warms the surface. Once heated, the surface in turn radiates infrared waves outward. Though the atmosphere was transparent to sunlight, it may not be to infrared light and these waves will be absorbed. This retains the heat inside the atmosphere.

Since 1944 Kuiper and others have closely studied Titan. There are dark and light markings which change with time. Cornell University's J. Ververka has noted that sunlight is reflected from Titan in a way reminiscent of the reflection from clouds, rather than from a solid surface. Titan is also quite red, probably because of pinkish methane clouds. Until recently these facts fit together into a fairly consistent view.

Though Titan has only a sixth Earth gravity the top of its atmosphere is relatively cold, so it should retain heavy gases such as the methane Kuiper found, but not lighter gases. Thus some astrophysicists were surprised in 1972 when L. Trafton of the University of Texas announced he had found hydrogen, the lightest gas of all, in Titan's atmosphere. Hydrogen, like methane, absorbs infrared radiation efficiently and seems a good candidate for a greenhouse agent. The presence of hydrogen in the atmosphere is a mystery though, unless it is steadily replenished by Titan itself. Cornell University's G. Mullen and Carl Sagan believe volcanoes on Titan may give off large quantities of liquid ammonia, methane and water. These fluids could percolate to the surface, evaporate and enter the atmosphere. Ultraviolet sunlight would then break them down into hydrogen and several types of organic compounds. This would be a continuing source of hydrogen and the organic molecules could explain the reddish hue of Titan.

Whatever the mechanism, methane and hydrogen combine to form a warming blanket about tiny Titan. Recent theoretical studies have tried to sketch the formation of such small worlds, assuming they began as large clumps of dust and the various ices which seem prevalent in the outer solar system.

As one would expect, the

heavier rocky portions of the mix sank inward and formed a core surrounded by a thick mantle of liquid water and ammonia. Gravitational compression should have warmed the interior somewhat, providing the heat to keep most of the water and ammonia slush from freezing. Overlying this is a crust of solid ice perhaps thirty miles thick. Meteorites falling on this ice crust would cause extensive cracks and spectacular craters. Any volcanic magma boiling up through the liquid mantle would warm portions of the surface, perhaps providing pools of liquid methane.

There are probably no ponds of water or liquid ammonia, for although Titan is anomalously warm it is still quite chilly by Earthly standards. (Ammonia freezes at -78 degrees C. on Earth.) In chemical composition our picture of Titan's surface resembles the early Earth. It is a much colder place, though, and at first glance seems an unlikely site for important biological processes. Our ideas about biochemistry are based on a very narrow range of experience, however, and there is no reason (as far as we know) why our particular biochemistry is the only one which might evolve in a wide range of planetary conditions. All living creatures on Earth are made up of complex carbon compounds containing nucleic acids and proteins. The nucleic acids carry the blueprint of inherited characteristics and

proteins do the many tasks of transmitting this information. These ingredients live in a bath of water; all life we know has evolved to use water wherever possible.

Life is essentially supported by a welter of complex organic molecules immersed in water. But water is not the only solvent which promotes chemical reaction. Many of ammonia's properties—heat capacity, heat of evaporation, versatility as a solvent, and tendency to liberate a hydrogen ion—are in the biological sense almost as good as water's. If conditions on Titan permit liquid ammonia, many biological reactions analogous to those which occur in water may be possible.

More likely on Titan are ponds of methane. Methane is not the same sort of liquid as water, however. Molecules of ordinary salt break up into separate ions of sodium and chlorine in water. Water's ability as an ionizing solvent enables it to encourage chemical reactions and the formation of complex structures. In a totally inert background substances receive no help from the solvent. Methane is inert in this sense; it cannot dissolve substances which have separated positive and negative charges in them. This would seem to destroy any analogy we wish to make between life in a water ocean and life in methane pools. But methane can dissolve other types

of substances, such as fat or oil. Water cannot do this—thus “oil and water don’t mix.”

Proteins are very long molecules capable of carrying a great deal of information in their complex chains. This variety and versatility seems necessary to communicate the vast library of genetic information which life requires. To imagine a methane environment which is not hostile to the formation of complex structures we must search out long organic molecules which can interact in methane.

Ammonia and water can break up materials and speed reaction because the electric charges in their molecules are not symmetrically distributed. These are called polar liquids, meaning they can dissolve substances such as ordinary salt which have separated charges in them. Methane is a non-polar liquid. There are already some non-polar molecules on earth which could conceivably react in a methane environment. Our own brains contain giant non-polar molecules of complex and unknown function.

The obvious drawback to liquid methane as a background for chemical evolution is its coldness. Life uses compounds which are marginally stable and can react quickly and variously in many subtle fashions. Temperature has a great influence on these reactions. At Earthly temperatures the hydrogen bond produces arrangements that can be broken

conveniently, yet at the same time do not fall apart if left alone for a short while. In cold methane ponds weaker bonds might play the same role that hydrogen bonds do on Earth. Our Earthly biochemistry would be sluggish indeed in a methane ocean. But we cannot rule out the possibility that fat chains can be quite reactive in cold methane surroundings. These molecules would be so unstable at earthly temperatures that we probably do not even know of them.

Of course, there must be sources of energy to drive chemical reactions as well as a hospitable solvent to contain them. Though we know little of surface conditions on Titan there are probably energy sources there resembling those on the primitive Earth. Lightening may fork between the methane clouds observed above Titan. High energy particles from the sun will bombard the surface. Volcanoes could be a continuing source of heat and raw material percolating up from the core.

Remembering that reactions at low temperatures require less energy to drive them, we can speculate that quite complex organic chemistries may proceed at respectable rates in methane ponds. Long molecules like the fats and oils we know could combine in subtle fashion to set the stage for life itself.

Titan is not the largest moon in the solar system, though it is the

only one definitely known to have an atmosphere. The preliminary results of Pioneer 10 indicate that Io, a large moon orbiting close to Jupiter, also has an atmosphere.

After Io emerges from Jupiter's shadow it is unusually bright. The luster fades within fifteen minutes, leading some to speculate that Io has a thin atmosphere which condenses out in Jupiter's cold shadow. The largest satellite of all is Jupiter's fourth moon, Ganymede, which has 0.16 Earth gravity. Because it is closer to the sun than Titan the top of any atmosphere present on Ganymede would be warmer. The search for absorption of particular frequencies on Ganymede (which would signify the presence of atmospheric gases) have so far found none. However, like all the four large Jovian moons, Ganymede reflects light well and has dark and light markings. There may be snowfields there among areas of dirty ice or bare rock. Light reflected from them seems characteristic of snow or rock powder.

All the large moons in the solar system are distant and relatively small compared to their planets. Detecting atmospheres around them is a delicate task. We cannot be sure whether any of the large moons aside from Titan possess atmospheres until more work is done. Settling questions of biochemistry demands close reconnaissance.

Our reasoning that ammonia or methane could be life-supporting

solvents holds equally well when applied to the large Jovian planets themselves. There is good evidence that a greenhouse effect operates within Jupiter. Some layers deep within the Jovian planets are probably at Earthlike temperatures. Possibly ammonia and methane seas exist there. Recent experiments by C. Ponnamporuma and co-workers have shown that complex organic structures form readily in conditions appropriate to Jupiter.

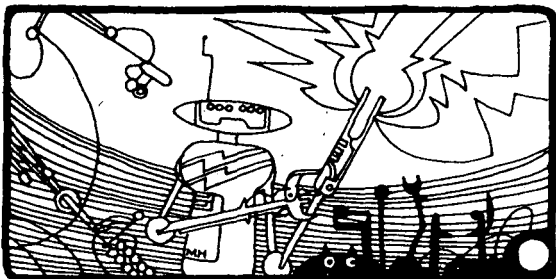
However, studying oceans deep inside the giant planets will be extremely difficult. Clouds at the top of Jupiter's great atmosphere move faster than the velocity of sound. Our space program cannot muster rugged probes capable of surviving entry far into the Jovian cloud belt.

In terms of energy requirements and landing conditions, though, the moons of Jupiter and Saturn are relatively easy to reach. If elementary biochemistries can evolve there we could investigate them at relatively small cost.

Within a decade we may have preliminary answers to questions of life on Mars and among the clouds of Venus. To gain more knowledge about the prevalence of life in the universe, space exploration may turn to the moons of Jupiter and Saturn, particularly Titan. We may find there circumstances reminiscent of the early earth, and solve many riddles otherwise impossible to explore,

(cont. on page 129)

...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced on each sheet, and addressed to Or So You Say, Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.

Dear Mr. White,

I am writing in regard to your response to my letter which appeared in the February AMAZING disputing your editorial in the December issue which, in part, advocated the legalization of narcotics on the grounds that this would lower the crime rate. You said that the fact drugs are illegal causes their price to become inflated, which, in turn, causes crimes committed by their users in order to obtain money with which to purchase them.

But my point was, this is hardly a valid reason for legalizing drugs. If they *were* legalized, then certainly their usage would greatly increase (as did drinking after Prohibition was repealed), and God only knows how this would effect the country. Legalization of drugs would, of course, drive down their cost. But since more people would be using them, if not because of their sudden cheapness, the resultant additions to the ranks of the hopelessly addicted (who are, of course, unable to hold any kind of a job and thus unable to pay *any* price, no matter *how* cheap, for their drugs)

could quite possibly result in more crimes committed to support their habits, albeit fewer per individual. This would ironically defeat the very purpose of legalizing drugs!

You also said that research showing drugs to be genetically damaging was "bugaboo," and had been conducted by "irresponsible medical 'researchers' whose experiments are so sloppily conducted as to be worthless." Well, I don't know about that; my understanding is that some (if not all) narcotics *can* cause genetic damage, and most certainly brain damage. At any rate, since no one has come forward with conclusive evidence showing drugs to be completely *safe*, isn't it stupid to use them until we know for sure? If a scientist said a certain brand of soup might contain deadly botulism poison, would you continue drinking it only until someone *conclusively* proved it could hurt you?

I could go on and on showing the dangers of drug use, such as the adverse effects they have on the senses, and the ease one can become addicted and/or suffer an overdose. But I won't belabor the point any longer, except to ask you this one question:

Why do you think drugs are illegal in the *first* place?

In my letter I also passingly mentioned my opposition to abortion, to

which you responded that killing an unborn child was, of all things, a "favor" to it since the world is overcrowded and its lot would not be a happy one anyway. Well, I don't know about *you*, but if given a choice, I'd *much* rather live in a calous and overcrowded world than not live at all. As for an unborn child not being wanted, I think we can find a better alternative to *killing* it. Namely, adoption. By *your* reasoning, the unwanted child of a divorced couple could be justifiably put to death because his life is so intolerable! My point is that even the most miserable existance is better than no existance at all. At any rate, who are *we* to decide whether a fellow human being lives or not?

Further, your equating my right-to-life position to the anti-life position is nonsense. Surely you couldn't have really been serious when you said abortion is, in fact, "pro-life" from the "viewpoint of the women involved, their families, and society in general," and that my right-to-life position is, therefore, "cruel and anti-life." Do you *really believe* that killing an innocent human being is a fair exchange for the selfish relief its mother or family would derive from its death?

You also stated that since there are so many spontaneous early term abortions, or "miscarriages," it doesn't matter if we add to this by *purposely* aborting unborn children. What kind of logic is this? That's like legalizing murder since so many people accidentally fall off cliffs and get hit by trucks!

And the pro-abortionists' heartbreaking argument that abortion should be legalized because otherwise women will do the job themselves with coat hangers and other grisly

devices and thus suffer much physical and mental anguish doesn't hold water, either. By the same token, we could continue this reasoning by setting up centers where mothers could take their children which they have decided they do not want after all, where they would be quietly and humanely gassed, rather than befall the messy and distasteful (not to mention inhuman) fate of being set upon by their mothers with kitchen knives or axes!

You view the unborn child as a "potential" life, likening it to unfertilized eggs. But the difference is obvious: one is the *seed* of life while the other is life. To kill an unborn child on the grounds that it is not yet a fully mature human being is comparable to killing a child who has not yet reached puberty for the same reason. While the unborn child is completely reliant upon its mother in its early stages of existance (both before and after its birth), it is still an altogether *separate entity*, with its very own unique genetic makeup. It eats, sleeps, grows, turns and kicks. If that isn't life, then I don't know what is. *This* is why I call pro-abortionists "anti-lifers."

I suspect that these absurd reasons and more put forth by anti-lifers in support of abortion are nothing more than flimsy excuses to justify their killing their own unwanted children which are such unbearable "inconveniences" to them. It really galls me to see so many people cold-bloodedly using abortion as just another birth control measure.

The Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion on the ridiculous grounds that the unborn child is the "property" of its mother and subject to whatever she wants to do with it is

an outrage. Who are *they* to play God, to decide who shall live and who shall die? I implore everyone to write his Congressmen as I have, urging they vote for a constitutional amendment outlawing this legalized murder. This is not as hopeless as it may sound. As students of American history well know, the Supreme Court once ruled *slavery* legal on similar grounds—that the slaves were the “property” of the slaveowners and thus they, too, could do what they wanted with them. Of course this decision was later overturned when Congress passed a constitutional amendment setting the slaves free.

Let us do the same for the defenseless millions of our fellow unborn human beings. Otherwise, who knows who could be deemed expendable *next*. Neglected, unwanted children? People over sixty-five years of age? The weakest, both physically and mentally, of the race? Themes along these lines have been used in many science fiction stories, and we all know the phenomenal batting average science fiction has had in predicting the future. Don't laugh! The thought is not as implausible as it may sound.

After all, 1984 is only ten years away.

ROB CARSON

51 East Reid Pl.

Vérona, N.J. 07044

I'm afraid that the problem here boils down to the fact that you are largely ignorant of the facts and are operating on a lot of half-truths and falsehoods generated in the press by irresponsible individuals. I do not pretend to be fully knowledgeable myself, but I can point out that a) the “hopelessly addicted” are not rendered “of course, unable to hold any kind of job.” Among professions with inci-

dence of hard-narcotics addiction (that is to say, addiction to opium derivatives like morphine and heroin) the medical profession rates highest. That is, there is a higher percentage of “junkies” among doctors than among most other identifiable professions. (Musicians rank near the bottom of the list, despite folklore to the contrary.) Yet these doctors continue in their practice of medicine without difficulty (they can obtain their drugs more cheaply and in a purer state, of course, and have legal access to them). The fact is that any narcotics addict can function normally on a maintenance dose—one which does not get him “high,” but satisfies his body's developed need for the drug. The same applies to methadone maintenance. (Heroin was developed, after all to deal with morphine addicts, just as methadone was developed for heroin addicts.) In addition, b) addiction to narcotics is a crime in this country because we have passed laws making it a crime. It is properly a medical and psychological problem, and its criminalization not only obscures this fact, it makes it harder to deal effectively with. Once we make a criminal out of an addict we make it easier for him to adopt other criminal attitudes—he's already on the wrong side of the law, outlawed and alienated. An average heroin “high” costs only five or ten cents to produce—the crime is that this cost has been driven up by blackmarketing so that an addict must steal in order to meet his habit's expense. Bear in mind that there is big money in the narcotics trade—billions of untaxed dollars—and that this money lies behind many of the attempts to retain criminal statutes against narcotics use. There is no reason to assume that legalized

narcotics would lead to crime in any form, and none has ever been demonstrated or proven. Further, c) your "understanding that some (if not all) narcotics can cause genetic damage, and most certainly brain damage" is based on no medical evidence I know of. Heroin, for example, in no way impairs the user's health—until he attempts to discontinue its use. But I feel you are seriously misusing the word "narcotics." At present the charges you level of genetic and brain damage (the destruction of brain cells) can only be applied to certain specific drugs, none of which are classified as "narcotics." These are primarily in the methadrine family: "speed." Other drugs which are known to cause chromosome damage (which may or may not lead to "genetic damage" which is found only in the offspring of users—not in the user himself) are asperin and coffee. Have you foresworn all use of those drugs? Do you think they should be prohibited and their use made a crime? The fact is that very few substances which we ingest in our bodies—especially the elements—are "safe" except in certain amounts (which, conversely, may be necessary for sustaining life). Our environment is full of substances which can be toxic if consumed in too great an amount. Some of these—lead and mercury—have been the subject of much concern in recent years. (Yet, have you noticed any legislation to ban or "criminalize" the use of lead in gasoline? I haven't.) You ask why I think "drugs are illegal"—but they aren't. Some drugs are illegal—and these are drugs which have threatened the power-structures of specific countries. Opium and its products are not illegal in Turkey, for instance, and the incidence of their use there—where opium

is grown—is extremely low. I suspect prohibitions against drugs have fostered their clandestine use more than any other single factor. But, to answer your question, certain drugs are illegal in this country because Congress and other officials passed legislation to make them illegal. Their reasons were usually emotional and based on very few facts. The legislation which made marijuana illegal in 1937 (yes, that recently) was based on willful distortion of facts by specific individuals who stood to gain political power thereby—primarily Harry Ainslinger, who parlayed a small department in the Treasury Department into a major position of vested power second only to J. Edgar Hoover's. As for the abortion issue, you are again arguing from your emotions—not from facts. And you are distorting what I said. A two-week-old embryo is not "an innocent human being" any more than a fertilized chicken egg is a functioning chicken. And two-week-old embryos are being spontaneously aborted by many women who are unaware that they have even been pregnant. As for whether or not it's a favor to allow unwanted children to be born, I wonder if you have picked up a newspaper recently and noted the number of child-abuse cases reported therein. One recent case which reached the courts here turned my stomach—a nine-year-old girl who was tortured over a period of months until she died. Most cases are not so extreme, but the emotional scars born by these children are wrecking our culture. They supply a ready-made criminal, revolutionary class—those who feel they have little or nothing to lose by destroying society. They are the Charles Mansons of our society. I think you must understand something very fundamental: life is not sacred.

Life is a natural condition on this planet—life is an environment. We, as human beings, are unique among the life-forms we know, but that does not give us the right to deify ourselves or our life-processes. In doing this we have wreaked untold havoc upon the natural balances of life here—we are in many ways comparable to a cancer-causing virus—and we are presently strongly endangering all forms of life on our planet. I find it reasonable to assume that if we do not deal with this problem ourselves—via every method of population control acceptable to us—it will be dealt with via natural catastrophes: famines, wars, plagues, even nuclear holocaust. . . and we will enjoy the consequences far less. I have a three-and-a-half-year-old daughter: she was desired and she is loved. She will not have any brothers or sisters, because I regard the desire for large families as dangerously anti-human. It is exactly those who do regard their children as property who want large families.

—TW

Dear Mr. White,

It seems like some of your white readers have grabbed up most of the best controversies. And maybe some of the worst. I would like to add a short brief one. Two other Indians and myself attended or rather tried to attend a Sci-fi convention (I will not specify which or where). We asked if we might buy tickets to attend. I am not sure if the person we asked was with the hotel or with the convention, whoever he was, he had some position of authority. He was also slightly drunk.

Except for hair worn in braids and boots—we were in normal street clothes. I would like to quote what this man said in refusing to let us in.

“How big chiefs! Where the hell do you think you’re going? Are you boys. Hikowwee-wee?” Then after we asked for tickets (We had the money to pay, we were not beggars) he said, “Like hell, no f- - - - - Indians are coming in here.”

At first we thought he was kidding. But he threatened to have us thrown out. We left. I do not know why we were not allowed.

If it was our clothes or not having a ticket in advance, it isn’t so bad. But I don’t think so much of the idea of being insulted and not let in because we are Indians. I realize this is an isolated case but conventions should pick their greeters or their hotels with much care.

The worst part of the whole thing was that I brought these two Indians to the convention to try to get them interested in science fiction. I told them that science fiction writers ounce for ounce have more integrity than any other kind of writing animal. I wanted them to try writing in this genre and help me with a magazine of American Indian science fiction. Fat chance. I still put out the magazine but I lost two very fine writers who refuse to write science fiction because of one clod at a convention. This, incidentally was my first and last convention. How many black science fiction writers are there? Indians? Same question for fans? Maybe there’s a reason. Its the occasional clod that spoils the sandcastle. That is a young Cherokee saying.

I will say this I edit a magazine called *Red Planet Earth* which is all Indian writers writing science fiction and I can’t think of a single instance where we turned down a white man’s money because he was white. Would

that all men could be such brothers!

CRAIG STRETE
140 Meyer Ave.

Dayton, Ohio 45431

Craig, I am offended that such a thing occurred to you, but there is very little I can do about it unless I know more about the circumstances—the location of the convention, etc. Prejudice of this form is, in my experience, unique. (I won't say "some of my best friends are Indians," but several have been—and active fans as well.) As the attendance at large conventions will indicate, sf seems to attract largely middle-class white males in our culture, probably because members of minorities find it less relevant to their immediate needs (thinking about the future is a luxury if your present is a problem). But at least one major, award-winning sf writer is black, and, as I have said, sf fandom has both blacks and Indians among its active members. So much of the sf world is conducted on paper and through the mail that I have no idea how many people whom I've not met might be members of either group—and that's one reason why our field is relatively free of such prejudices: we judge each other by what we say and do, not what we look like. So my advice to you is not to give up so easily; you've been the victim of an unusual situation and one I hope and expect will not be repeated. —TW

Dear Mr. White,

I would like to reply to the letter by Leah Zeldes in the February 74 issue of AMAZING. I have had a passion for science fiction since before I knew what it was called. For a long time it was a very lonesome thing, with books and magazines hard to find, and with the reaction of nearly every single person I knew ranging

from indifference to downright hostility. After a while I found a newsstand that carried the magazines and in one of them I read that the world convention would be held nearby that year. I managed to attend and suddenly there I was with about a thousand other people for whom enthusiasm for science fiction was the norm! They knew who Robert Heinlein and Virgil Finlay were. They knew a rocket would work without air to push against. For the first time in my life, all in one place I could: Buy a piece of original sf artwork. Help give Hugo Gernsback a standing ovation. Get a bunch of autographs. Laugh at Robert Bloch's jokes. Hear Willy Ley debate Ray Palmer on flying saucers. Buy some sought-after back issues. For three days I was on a science fiction binge and it was worth it, worth it, worth it.

Last labor day weekend at Toronto was home week all over again, except that this time I could also say hello to old friends from local clubs I had belonged to. I did not make a single new sf contact either time nor did I expect to. The way to be important at a science fiction convention is to be important to science fiction. Edit, write, publish, organize—but as in most fields, you start in the minors. The minimum to get along seems to be an abiding love for the field and the ability to talk intelligently about it, which implies knowing something before you come. Certainly a convention is the worst place in the world to expect the Dante treatment. All the Virgils are too busy.

LEONARD ZETTEL
69 W. Northrup Pl.
Buffalo N.Y. 14214

From your remarks I gather your first convention was the 1952 Worldcon in Chicago—twenty-two years ago! —TW

Dear Ted,

I'll admit your editorials catch my eye a lot more often than your stories since I'm one of those that like to keep up with what's going on in SF. Only lately I feel like I wandered into a fog.

Your statement concerning the number of readers you'd lose automatically if you raised the price of AMAZING really threw me. The same could certainly not be said where pocket books are concerned. (I can remember when the books were priced *lower* than the magazines. Which is why I buy a lot of my books second hand now.)

Seriously, Ted, what's going on? I walk into a bookstore and the clerk tells me Lancer is out of business (true or not?) Popular and Paperback Libraries are bought out either by movie companies or broadcasters and Ace.

And Ace?

What in blazes is going on with them? When they changed hands (on A.A. Wyn's death) Wollheim's departure was bad enough, but I thought everything had settled down when Fred Pohl moved over. Judging from Pohl's name appearing on Bantam's books, he didn't even get a chance to unpack. And all of this since your friend Terry Carr moved out.

Give, Ted. It isn't as if I was asking you to spill *your* dirty laundry. Ace at one time started more writers than all the other publishers combined (book publishers that is). (Can't remember if Silverberg was one of those or not, the son-of-gun writes under so many pen-names.)

I haven't forgotten that in those days Ace was what DAW is now. I didn't think DAW's departure would make that drastic a change.

P.S. Question of the year: who and

how many are "Gregory Kern"?

PHILIP H. MIRACLE

P.O. Box 352

Augusta, Ga. 30903

Well, we can only hope that we won't "automatically" lose 10,000 readers with this issue—I was remarking upon past experiences. As for "what's going on," yes, it is true that Lancer Books is presently bankrupt (but I have no details as to why), Popular Library has been purchased by CBS, and Paperback Library was bought (several years ago) by Kinney Systems, which since changed its name to Warner Communications and includes Warner Bros., the movie producers and Warner, Reprise, Atlantic and Elektra. Asylum records. As for Ace, when A. A. Wyn died the company was sold by the family to Charter Communications Inc., which retained the then-editorial staff for several years but apparently grew fiscally lax. Terry Carr left the company, under pressure, in 1971. Donald A. Wollheim left only a few months later, to start up his own company, DAW Books, in affiliation with Signet (New American Library-Times Mirror Inc.), which has pretty much assumed the role in sf which Ace had enjoyed previously. Fred Pohl was at Ace only a short time before differences over company policy (regarding payments to authors, as I understand it) led to his resignation. Since that time Forrest J Ackerman has acted as an editorial adviser (but he told me last year that Ace had gutted his Best of the Year anthology, removing nine stories including those he regarded as the best), and I gather Ace is publishing mostly already-contracted-for books and reissues at this point. What has happened to Ace is a sad lesson for us all. Ace, under Wyn, was a "genre" publisher and easily

the best (and most profitable). Under Charter, the thrust toward "best-seller" and mainstream, non-genre fiction was made—and a great deal of money was lost. Today Ace has lost much of its genre audience (not only in sf, but in western and gothic fiction as well) without attracting a new audience for its non-genre titles (most of which don't seem to be critical successes either). Robert Silverberg's first sale was a hardcover novel of juvenile sf, but many of his subsequent early efforts were published by Ace—as well as by this magazine and its sister publication, FANTASTIC. Who is "Gregory Kern"? Wollheim isn't telling, but the betting is that Kern is probably Wollheim himself, at least part of the time.—TW

Dear Sir:

I have read with interest, Thomas C. Watson's rantings about the "best" science fiction writers. It seems to me that critics and self proclaimed experts have forgotten certain facts. At the risk of beating this poor subject to death, I would like to express some views, not as an expert, but as one who should be listened to, a reader.

First, to qualify as one whose views should be considered. I am a long time fan of sf. An author (several stories, no success. Hell I thought they were good.), and I have read almost everything I could get my hands on. Basically, I am part of what keeps authors going, part of the paying public.

Mr. Watson and Mr. Boutillier both seem to rate authors by their own subjective likes and dislikes of the plots they have read. On this basis they rate authors by the "top 50" or some other such nonsense.

Personally I prefer R. Heinlein

over Philip José Farmer, but in no way would I say one is better than the other. It is merely that I usually prefer Heinlien's plots to Farmers'. But one better than the other, no way!

Again, personally I prefer the older style sf to the "new trend" but does that make one better than the other? Hardly! All it means is I like one type of sf and not the other.

If one author writes a rotten plot, I don't consign him to purgatory until he has redeemed himself by five Hugo Award novels, such as Mr. Watson appears to have done to Mr. Anthony. In regard to "Dentist in Space": I didn't think the plot was particularly well handled, but I see no reason to become a fanatic about the plot, and demand he make up for it.

Mr. Watson seemed to vilify all those authors who he did not care for. Come Mr. Watson, you are showing great immaturity. Why must all authors write to suit you, and you alone? Do you have the answer to the way it must be done? If everyone wrote to suit you, there is a very good chance no one else would be happy.

Mr. Watson also stated that he did not take chances on unknown authors. Asimov, del Rey, Heinlien, Farmer, van Vogt, etc., were all unknowns until they were published. Is an unknown author a bad author, or merely unknown?

Perhaps if all critics, paid and self-appointed, produced a top 50 list of preferred authors it would make more sense, but to say a subjectively preferred author is better is at best stupid!

I do not care that much for E.R. Burroughs, "Doc" Smith, Edwards, or Andre Norton (at least the

science-sorcery trend) etc. But all things considered, their works are very good and every now and then I read them for a change of pace. I do not think they are bad, just subjectively I do not care for them.

So what's the point? Subjectivity! To rate authors subjectively good or bad is to do a dis-service to the readers who should be given a chance to form their own opinion. Humans by definition are all individuals and all writers contribute. Even you Mr. White, think of what a drab world it would be if the only authors we had were those you subjectively liked. At the same time think of the likes and dis-likes of the "Great Unwashed" us, the paying public.

EDWIN N. MCLEON
13 11th St.
Edwards, Ca. 93523

And, as the next several letters make clear, any story I publish here will be liked by some of you and disliked by others of you. . . -TW

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading Barry N. Malzberg's short-story "Upping the Planet". I liked Malzberg's prose and the idea but there is one issue I would like to have clarified.

Mortimer asks, "What are the terms of these, uh, orgasms? In any circumstances at all?" The alien replies, "Certainly. With any partners." In the end Mortimer resorts to masturbation. Would that be acceptable to the Alien's terms? I assume that Mortimer's masturbation is solitary. In any case, I enjoyed the story.

E. HACKENBERG
(no address on latter)

Dear Ted,

I've just finished reading your April

issue, and I'm now looking at it with the same expression used to contemplate half a worm found in a luscious apple.

I enjoyed Brunner's first installment of "Total Eclipse" very much, though I'm afraid the Draconians' culture holds the attention better than the people who uncover it. Ian's vision of the destruction through the years of La Paz was very gripping, though, and reminded me of some of Stewart's descriptions from *Earth Abides*.

Turning next to Duncan Lunan's "Derelict", I found it well written, but lacking any change in the characters or any real action, it came off like a factual science article. Although Lunan is highly popular with the Sunday supplement crowd, I'm afraid his fiction's a little too dry for me.

"Local Control" was very good for a first sale, though the ending threatened to fall into the 'they walked off into the sunset, arm in arm, towards the bedroom' school of writing. I hope this is to be the first of many from Meschkow.

"Found in Space" and "After You've Stood. . ." were both enjoyable, but one humorous short-short goes a long way. It's a little bit like eating honey. . .

Now comes the worm. I didn't find "Upping the Planet" repugnant, as I'm sure many of your readers did, merely inadequate. The dialogue between Mortimer and the alien seems too contrived to be funny, and the ending. . . well, I guess it was just too subtle for me. And on top of "Upping the Planet" we have (yawn) Busby's idle musings. I wonder what time of the morning he wrote it. I'm sure it helped him get to sleep.

The usual features were excellent, as always, but I hope this 'my

author's better than your author (Leiber, Kuttner, George O. Smith, H. Beam Piper)' discussion in the letters soon runs its course.

STEPHEN H. DORNEMAN
221 S. Gill St.

State Collage, Pa. 16801

For a totally negative view of Malzberg's "Upping the Planet," see Allen Kerr's letter in the editorial this issue. -TW

RE: Upping the Planet and the State of Ultimate Peace.

I, Satan, Am newly crowned patron of the arts. Let us indulge, my friends. There is salvation in twenty-four hour fornication. Of course I can save the Human race, as pressed as sugar cubes in a box waiting to melt in the coffee of fire. I can give a laugh, a rapid breath. Every hour I scale the heights and plunge to a new erection. I am a soldier, too. I am a human, too. Am I a creation? No, I am just here.

These our writers as I now inform you, are all spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air. Here are baseless fabrics for our visions: Black clouds of words of sex which shadow the valley.

Aye, in the valley of the shadow of death, I feel no evil, for I am you, and we all are one.

One for all, in orgasm we live.

Down, sirs?

T. K. JOHNSON
p.o. box 5949
Sarasota, Fla. 33579

Dear Mr. White:

I just received the December AMAZING today. Some comments: The editorial: Your point was a good one, but don't you think that you are succumbing to the Bova Syndrome? Relevance is ok as far as I'm con-

cerned, but let's keep it in *Analog* where it belongs. (which is not to say that I disapprove of *Analog*, it's just that I feel that AMAZING should have a more fan-oriented format. I don't mind an editorial like it once in a while, but when two appear consecutively (the November FANTASTIC and this month) I don't really like it. Stick to sf topics, please.

Book reviews: Mr. Monteleone did it again! This time, though, the book was as bad as he said it was. I'm beginning to think that Monteleone deliberately reviews the bad books. Come on, "Monty", show us a little of the other side of the fence.

The lettercol: I see that Lester Boutellier is up to his old tricks again. Leaving off Heinlein, Clarke, and Asimov from that list of best writers of his was unforgiveable. Also, What's Hugo Gersback doing on that list? Certainly, he was a pioneer in the genre, but he was a terrible writer. I am glad that Mr. Boutellier has noticed that new sf slick, *Vertex*. I bought a copy on a newstand one day, but I have never encountered even a passing reference to it anywhere. It's pretty good for a newborn magazine.

Stories: I wish that there were more of them. If you had broken down the Brunner novel into smaller pieces for serialization, you might have been able to fit a few more shorts in. Otherwise, thoroughly enjoyable.

The current wave of UFO sightings in Louisiana (and one not more than ten miles away from where I live here in Hawaii) has given me a rather unusual idea which I thought that the readers of AMAZING might be interested in. Out of curiosity, I tried to determine if the new rash of sightings fit into any pattern set by sets of

sightings in the past. To my surprise, it did. In the past thirty years there have been three waves of UFO sightings: early 1947, late 1955 and early 1956, and all of 1964. Interestingly enough, these times are about 8½ years apart. Now, in late 1973, or again about 8½ after the last wave of sightings, the number of reported UFO's are increasing.

Now, then, what is it that happens every 8½ years? Well, for one thing, it would take about eight and three fourths years to make a round trip to that well known star Alpha Centauri, traveling at a speed just under that of light. Giving a reasonable amount of error for spur of the moment calculations, it appears quite possible that the flying saucers are coming from Alpha Centauri, if one assumes that the Centaurians have a marvelous logistic system and wait for the last expedition to return before they send out a new one.

I would like to say that I am not a rabid UFOlogist, nor am I a believer that little men from outer space are saving civilization from the atom bomb. I am merely offering some food for thought.

ALAN BOSTICK
% Hawaii Prep. Academy
Kamuela, H.I., 96743

Dear Ted:

Okay, you can let the secret out. Brunner was making a funny, right? Ha. Ha. His whole story is just another *Stone That Never Came Down*, right? No? My God. Oh well. Well, onward. . .

I mean, we start off with this bunch of half-wits that have a hard time adjusting to life. Like a school-teacher who's mad at the parents who got him fired when they found out what he was teaching their kids. Or a

Jewish queer, who's defensive about being both. ("...name a weapon of modern war that wasn't invented and first used by a Christian country!" Oh, come on. Name a war that Israel was in that it didn't start. [*How about the one which was going on when you wrote this letter?*—tw] Or name an aggressor nation of the last fifty years that didn't persecute Catholics, if it had any.) How about the broad who beds him and figures that any drug named vc must stand for *vigorous copulation*! (The exclamation point and emphasis are Brunner's. Is that why I kept on misreading vc and vd?) Anyway, all these people contract a Magic Disease that makes them Aware to All of Life. Its most usual vector of transmission is in the form of Magic White Crystals.

Okay, so far so good. Or so bad. Not that much different from a White Americans Conquer the Universe story, in its basics. It even has the same sort of dialogue:

"Braking for yet another stoplight—but they were making good progress on the roundabout route he had switched to—Kneller said, "That sounds like a real boon! Lord, when I was in my mid-thirties, I thought the millennium had arrived, you know. I had. . . Well, I had a rather repressed upbringing. It wasn't that my parents wanted me to be inhibited; rather, it was that to find out how to make me uninhibited they had to go and look up a book! Twenty years ago, fifteen, I was really getting excited about the relaxed and casual attitudes of my students. I thought maybe we were going to digest this conflict between the Christian injunction to get married and stay married, and the simple fact that nowadays we live so much longer it's

a miracle if you can settle for a single partner, so—Sorry! It's a hobbyhorse of mine, that. I didn't mean to go off at a tangent." Reminds me of that good old "...and now you see why we must destroy all of those red Knifli devils!" dialogue.

I could go on about the characterization and so on, but that stuff doesn't really bother me. *Stone* follows the general rules of all pulp fiction, in that all characters and so on are just exactly what a reader might want them to be. Women are beautiful (and, lately, sexually active). Heroes are stainless, and well, just *better* than everybody else. Villians are evil and made of straw. And so on. Oh, Brunner uses some new clichés, well new for science fiction, anyway, (I like the one completely new cliché that he invents: using a Homosexual Jew as a replacement for the good old Drunk Village Atheist. Original. But the rest, from the Kapitalist government to the Black Militant—clichés.) but I guess that's just because Brunner was breaking new ground. The White Powder Dream replaces the old White Power Fantasy. (Come to think of it, it must take a certain amount of skill to invent a completely new cliché.) Well, as I've said, I don't mind that sort of pulp fiction going around. I just don't read it.

But one thing does bother me about Brunner—the man's a god-damn bigot, and he's open about it.

I mean like, where does he get off writing lines like, "Moreover I've watched Harry Bott grow a conscience. Small-time, thief, practising Catholic, treated his wife abominably. Now he says he's going to go straight."

How would he like it if I wrote something like, "The man exploits

workers, molests children, and writes science fiction," eh? Would he consider that clever? Not that I worry that the writings of Brunner will ever be taken as the basis of an anti-Christian philosophy. I trust that most readers with brains will snicker when Brunner shifts the focus of hate from Godheads and parents forcing their beliefs on other people to a priest not doing the above. Or maybe not. Come to think of it, to paraphrase Dan Berrigan. Americans who can cheer on the sight of stolen military secrets are enraged and baffled by the thought of attempty to steal party files. At one time I would have thought people would have gotten mad about both events. Oh, well. Anyway, back to Brunner: Is he serious about being a bigot? Come to think of it, he gives some of his best lines to an Italian Fascist. Either he's really a Fascist or he's letting on that he's just kidding, there. That and titling a story about a Magic White Powder that saves the world "The Stone That Never Came Down"...no, he was probably just weakening, and rounding out one of the characters.

I realize that this letter is pretty disjointed, and if you're still reading this, you realize that too. But *Stone* confuses me. I mean, does Brunner really want to see the Lady Washgrave in a miniskirt? (See p. 13 of the first issue if you don't know what I'm getting at.) On a less obvious level, it confuses me to see a housing developer and some rioters, both driven to break the Law by 'economic necessity', given different treatment. (And I don't mean by society—I know that both get arrested when their actions become too flagrant, then released—I mean by Brunner.)

(cont. on page 126)

generosity. Both were prepared for her insistence that they transfer from the Seascape to Villa Mirasol and stay a week, two weeks, a month. "I've seen neither of you for so long. Schaine, it's been at least—how many years?"

"Five."

"So long? How time goes! I never really understood why you went flouncing off to Tanquil. Your father is a dinosaur, of course, but he's a dear for all that, even if he refuses to come across to Olanje. What can he find to amuse him in Uaia? A wilderness, a dreadful emptiness!"

"Come now, Aunt Val, it's not that bad! In fact Uaia is full of magnificent scenery."

"Perhaps so, but why Uther and the others insist on living out where they're not wanted, I'll never understand. Morningswake is like a border fortress."

"Someday you should come pay us a visit," said Kelse.

Valtrina gave her head a decisive shake. "I haven't been to Morningswake since I was a girl. Your grandfather Norius was a gentleman of style for all of being a land-baron. He hosted several parties—rather stuffy occasions, to be absolutely candid, and took us for a picnic to an enormous pillar of red rock; what's it called?"

"The Skaw."

"The Skaw, of course. And when the tribesmen came past and looked at us, the aliens who had taken their land, I felt fright-

ened and oppressed, for all the space. It was as if we were besieged!"

"Our Aos have never given us trouble," said Kelse patiently. "We help them and they help us. Neither resents the other."

Valtrina gave her head a smiling shake. "My dear boy, you can't possibly divine what goes on in an Uldra mind. Of course they resent your presence, even though they show you blank faces. I know, because I have Uldra friends! But I shouldn't remonstrate with you; you're just a boy. Come along then, I'll introduce you to my friends. Or perhaps you'd prefer just to wander about?"

"We'd rather just wander," said Kelse.

"Just as you like. Have Alger fix you drinks. Kelse, please don't draw a gun and shoot my erjins; their names are Sim and Slim and they're extremely expensive. We'll have a good chat later on this evening." Valtrina moved off to welcome a new group of guests; Kelse took Schaine's arm and led her to the buffet where Alger the steward dispensed refreshment, using formulas older than memory. Kelse and Schaine accepted goblets of punch; and paused to take their bearings. Schaine saw no one she knew among the guests. Half a dozen Uldras were present: tall, thin, long-nosed bravos, their slate-gray skin dyed ultramarine, their wads of pale russet hair confined within

the tall spikes of a fillet.

Kelse muttered to Schaine: "Trust Aunt Val to be fashionable; in Olanje no party is complete without an Uldra or two."

Schaine retorted: "Why shouldn't Uldras be invited to parties? They're human."

"Approximately human. Their welderwiste* is alien to ours. They've drifted quite a distance on the evolutionary floe."

Schaine sighed, and turned to inspect the Uldras. "Is one of them the Gray Prince?"

"No."

Valtrina approached with a handsome man in his middle maturity: a person of obvious distinction, wearing a dark gray suit embroidered with pale gray arabesques. She brought her companion to a halt. "Erris, my niece and nephew Schaine and Kelse Madduc. Schaine is just home from Tanquil, where she's been at school. Schaine, Kelse, this is Erris Sammatzen, who sits on the Mull: a man of great importance." She added with perhaps a hint of malice: "Schaine and Kelse live on Morningswake Domain in the Alouan, which they claim to be the single habitable area of Koryphon."

*Weldewiste: a word from the lexicon of social anthropology, to sum up a complicated idea comprising the attitude with which an individual confronts his environment; his interpretation of the events of his life; his cosmic consciousness; his perception of self vis-a-vis the universe; his character and personality from the purview of comparative culture.

"Perhaps they know more than we do."

Schaine asked, "Are you native to Olanje, Dm.* Sammatzen?"

"No, I'm an Outker like almost everyone else. I came here twelve years ago to rest, but who can rest when Valtrina and a dozen like her insist on keeping me alert? This is the most intellectually alive community I've ever known. Really, it's most exhausting."

Valtrina beckoned to a tall woman with long blonde ringlets. Her over-large features were exaggerated by cosmetics into a clown's mask; Schaine wondered if she mocked the world or herself. Valtrina spoke in her hoarsest contralto: "This is Glinth Isbane, one of our celebrities: she taught three morphotes to play desisto and won all kinds of strange booty. She's secretary of SFS and far more profound than she likes to appear."

"What's SFS?" asked Schaine. "Excuse me, I'm just back on Koryphon."

"SFS means 'Society for a Free Szintarre'."

Schaine laughed incredulously. "Isn't Szintarre free now?"

"Not altogether," said Glinth Isbane in a cool voice. "No one

*The two most common appellatives of the Gaeen Reach are Dm., for Domine, which may properly be applied to all persons of distinguished or exalted station, and Vv., a contraction of Visfer, (originally Viasvar, an Ordinary of the ancient Legion of Truth), then a landed gentleman, finally the common polite appellative.

wants—I should say, no one admits that he wants—to exploit toil or discomfort for gain, but everyone knows that this is often the case. Workers therefore have banded into guilds to protect themselves. And now, who wields more raw power than the Director of the Associated Guilds? I need not remind you of the abuses from this direction. The SFS has therefore organized a force which we hope will exactly counter-balance the excesses of the guilds.”

Another person had joined the group: a tall young man with guileless gray eyes, soft blond hair, pleasant half-humorous features which instantly appealed to Schaine. He remarked: “Both groups—the SFS and the Associated Guilds—support my particular organization. Hence, both must be sound, and your conflicts are pettifoggery.”

Glinth Isbane laughed. “Both groups endorse SEE, but for quite different reasons. Our reasons are the decent ones.”

Schaine said to Valtrina, “I’m confused by all these organizations. What is SEE?”

Valtrina, rather than explaining, brought forward the blond young man. “Elvo, meet my charming niece, just arrived from Tanquil.”

“With great pleasure.”

“Schaine Madduc; Elvo Glissam. Now Elvo, explain the meaning of SEE, but don’t mention me or my expensive footmen or I’ll have them fling you out

into the street.”

“SEE is Society for Emancipation of the Erjins,” said Elvo Glissam. “Please don’t think us maudlin; we’re truly attacking a serious injustice: the enslavement of intelligent beings. Valtrina, with her erjin servants, is one of our prime targets, and we’ll have her behind bars yet. Unless she displays remorse and frees her slaves.”

“Ha! First demonstrate two things—no, three. Prove to me that Sim and Slim are intelligent beings rather than domestic animals. Then prove that they would prefer to be emancipated. Then find me two other domestics with as much docility, style and dependability as my black and mustard beauties. In fact, I intend to buy three or four more and train them as gardeners.”

One of the erjin footmen had just entered the chamber, rolling a service wagon. Looking over her shoulder Schaine cringed away. “Don’t they frighten you? The buck that chewed up Kelse wasn’t much bigger, if at all.”

“If I were running things,” said Kelse, “I’d shoot them all.”

Glinth Isbane’s voice took on an edge. “If they’re intelligent, it’s murder. If they’re not, it’s brutality.”

Kelse shrugged and turned aside. A few minutes previously Gerd Jemasze had appeared on the scene; now he said: “We fear our erjins; you don’t. Incidentally, I don’t notice any societies which advocate taking erjin mounts away

from the Uldras."

"Why don't you form one?" snapped Glinth Isbane.

Erris Sammatzen chuckled. "As for the erjins and Vv. Glissam's SEE, the labor guilds are understandably anxious: the erjins represent cheap labor. Vv. Glissam is presumably motivated by other concerns."

"Naturally. The Gaeian Charter prohibits slavery, and the erjins are enslaved: benignly here at Olanje, not so benignly in Uaia. And the Wind-runners, whose role everyone ignores, are slavers, pure and simple."

"Or domesticators—if they conceive the erjins to be no more than clever beasts."

Schaine said: "I can't understand how erjins can be tamed; in fact, I can't believe it! An erjin is ferocious; it hates men!"

"Sim and Slim are quite docile," said Valtrina. "As to how and why: I can't even guess."

Sim the erjin footman once again passed by, splendid in its livery. Meeting the opaque orange gaze from among the black optical tufts, Schaine received the uncomfortable impression that it understood all which transpired. "Perhaps it would prefer not being gelded or altered or brainwashed—whatever the Win-runners do to it."

"Ask it," Valtrina suggested agreeably.

"I don't know how."

Valtrina's contralto voice became lofty and careless. "So why

worry? They're free to leave whenever they like. I don't keep them in chains. Do you know why they work here? Because they prefer Villa Mirasol to the deserts of Uaia. No one complains except the Association of Labor Guilds which feels a threat to its absurdly high wage structure." Valtrina gave her head a lordly jerk and stalked across the room where a pair of Uldras formed the nucleus of another group.

Gerd Jemasze spoke to no one in particular: "I won't say that all this talk is a waste of time, because people seem to enjoy it."

In a frigid voice Glinth Isbane said: "Words are the vehicle of ideas. Ideas are the components of intellectualization, which distinguished men from animals. If you object to the exchange of ideas, then—in essence—you reject civilization."

Jemasze grinned. "Not such a bad idea as you might think."

Glinth Isbane turned away and went off to join Valtrina. Jemasze and Kelse sauntered to the buffet where Alger supplied them refreshment. Schaine went to inspect a pair of Uldra lamps, carved from blocks of red chert in the distinctive Uldra style of reckless assymetry. Elvo Glissam came to join her. "Do you like these lamps?"

"They're interesting to look at," said Schaine. "Personally, I wouldn't care to own them."

"Oh? They seem very dashing and adventurous."

Schaine gave a grudging nod. "I suppose it's a prejudice left over from my childhood, when everything Uldra was supposed to be erratic and uneven and wild. I realize now that the Uldras consider uniformity a kind of slavishness; they express their individualism in irregularity."

"Perhaps they try to suggest regularity by presenting something else: a very sophisticated technique."

Schaine pursed her lips. "I doubt if the Uldras would reason so methodically. They're extremely proud and truculent, especially the Retent Uldras, and I suspect that their art-work reflects as much. It's just as if the lamp-maker were saying: 'This is how I choose to make this lamp; this is my caprice; if you don't like it, seek elsewhere for light'."

"That's the effect produced, certainly. At best: magnificence. At worst: a kind of strident peevishness."

"Which, in fact, expresses the Uldra temperament."

Elvo Glissam looked across the room toward the two Uldras. Schaine studied him from the corner of her eye. She liked him, so she decided; he seemed gentle and humorous and subtle in his perceptions. Additionally, he was nice to look at, with his soft blond hair and pleasantly regular features. He stood perhaps an inch taller than the average; he appeared athletic, in an easy loose-limbed fashion. . . He turned to

find her eyes on him and responded with a self-conscious smile. Schaine said rather hurriedly: "You're not a native to Szintarre?"

"I'm from Jennet on Diamantha. A dreary city on an unexciting world. My father publishes a pharmaceutical journal; right now I'd probably be writing an article on the latest foot-powders if my grandfather hadn't given me a lottery ticket for my birthday."

"The ticket paid off?"

"A hundred thousand SLU*."

"What did you do with it?"

Elvo Glissam made a casual, or perhaps modest, gesture. "Nothing remarkable. I paid off the family debts, bought my sister a Cloud-hopper and put the rest out at interest. So here I am, living on a modest but adequate income."

"And what do you do besides just live?"

"Well, I've got two or three things going on. I work for SEE, as you know, and I'm putting together a collection of Uldra war songs. They're natural musicians, and produce the most wonderful songs which don't get half the attention they deserve."

"I grew up with those songs," said Schaine. "In fact, I could sing

*SLU: Standard Labor-Value Unit; the monetary unit of the Gaean Reach, defined as the value of an hour of unskilled labor under standard conditions. The unit supersedes all other monetary bases, in that it derives from the single invariable commodity of the human universe: toil.

a few blood-curdlers right now, if I were in the right mood."

"Some other time."

Schaine laughed. "I'm seldom anxious to burn my enemies, one by one, 'with six thousand fires and six thousand pangs'."

"The Gray Prince, incidentally, is supposed to be here tonight."

"The Gray Prince— isn't he the Uldra messiah, or rabble-rouser, or some such special agent?"

"So I'm told. He advocates what he calls 'Pan-Uldra'—an association of the Retent tribes, which then will absorb the Treaty tribes and ultimately eject the land-barons from Uaia. Over here he's sponsored by the Redemptionists, which means almost everyone in Szintarre."

"Including yourself?"

"Well—I don't like to admit it to the daughter of a land-baron."

Schaine sighed. "I don't really mind. I'm going back to live at Morningswake, and I've determined not to quarrel with my father."

"Aren't you putting yourself in a very awkward position? I feel in you a certain awareness of justice and fair-play—"

"In other words, am I a Redemptionist? I hardly know what to say. Morningswake is my home, so I've been brought up to believe. But what if I really didn't have any right to be there, would I still want to keep it? To be candid, I'm glad that my opinion carries absolutely no weight, so that I can enjoy going home without

suffering pangs of conscience."

Elvo Glissam laughed. "At least you're honest. If I were you I might feel the same way. Kelse is your brother? Who is the grim dark-haired fellow with the stomach-ache?"

"That's Gerd Jemasze of Suaniset, the domain next east to ours. He's always been lofty and saturnine, ever since I can remember."

"I think someone said—probably Valtrina—that an erjin attacked Kelse."

"Yes, it was absolutely horrible, and erjins terrify me to this day. I can't believe that those great beasts are tame."

"There are many different kinds of human beings; maybe there are different kinds of erjins."

"Perhaps. . . When I see those great maws and awful arms, I think of poor little Kelse, all chewed and ripped."

"It's a miracle he's alive."

"He'd be dead except for an Uldra boy we called Muffin, who came with a gun and blew the erjin's head off. Poor Kelse. Poor Muffin, for that matter."

"What happened to Muffin?"

"It's a long sordid story. I don't want to talk about it."

For a moment the two stood in silence. Elvo Glissam said: "Let's go out on the terrace and look over the sea—where you'll be flying tomorrow."

Schaine thought that this was a pleasant idea, and they walked out into the warm night. Through

the campander fronds the lights of Olanje were scattered in a long irregular crescent; overhead hung the stars of the Gaean Reach, many seeming to shimmer with an extra significance for the populated worlds surrounding.*

Elvo Glissam said: "An hour ago you were not even a name, and now Schaine Madduc is you, and I'll be sorry to see you leave. Are you sure that you prefer Uaia to Olanje?"

"I can hardly wait to get home."

"Isn't it bleak and drab and depressing?"

"Of course not! Where have you heard such nonsense? Uaia is magnificent! The sky is so wide, the horizons are so far, that mountains, valleys, forests and lakes are lost in the landscape. Everything swims in light and air; I can't describe the effect except to say that Uaia does something to your soul. I've missed Morningswake terribly these last five years."

"You make Uaia sound interesting."

"Oh, it's interesting, but it's not a soft place. Uaia is often cruel—more often than not. If you saw the wild erjin destroying

*On the worlds of the Gaean Reach and Alastor Cluster, especially those with rural populations, a new profession has come into existence: the man skilled in starnaming and star-lore. For a fee he enlivens nocturnal gatherings with his tales, marvels and descriptions of the worlds surrounding stars within the vision of those present.

our cattle, you might not be so pro-erjin."

"See? You completely misunderstand me! I'm not pro-erjin! I'm anti-slavery, and erjins are slaves."

"Not the wild erjins! Better if they were."

Elvo Glissam gave an indifferent shrug. "I've never seen a wild erjin, and I'm not likely to have the opportunity. They're quite extinct in Szintarre."

"Come out to Morningswake; you'll see wild erjins, as many as you like."

Elvo Glissam said rather wistfully: "I'd accept the invitation if I thought you were serious."

Schaine hesitated barely an instant, although her invitation had been intended in general rather than specific terms. "Yes, I'm serious."

"What of Kelse? What of your father?"

"Why should they mind? Guests are always welcome at Morningswake."

Elvo Glissam reflected a moment. "When do you leave?"

"First thing in the morning. We fly with Gerd Jemasze to Galigong, at the edge of the Rentent; there my father meets us. Tomorrow at sunset we'll be at Morningswake."

"Your brother might consider me forward."

"Of course not! Why should he?"

"Very well then. I'll be more than happy to accept. In fact I'm

tremendously excited." Elvo Glissam straightened up from the balustrade. "In which case I'll now have to leave this party, to pack some clothes and change some arrangements. And I'll meet you at your hotel early tomorrow morning."

Schaine held out her hand. "Goodbye till then."

Elvo Glissam bent his head and kissed her fingers. "Goodnight." He turned and walked away. Schaine watched him go with a halfsmile on her face and a soft warm pressure in her throat.

She followed Elvo inside and wandered from room to room until, in that chamber which Valtrina called the Kachemba, after the sacred places of the Uldras, she found Kelse and Gerd Jemasze debating the authenticity of Valtrina's antique fetishes.

Kelse picked up a blasphemy mask* and raised it to his face. "I can smell gabbhout smoke, and there's a smear of what looks like dilt by the nostril-holes."

Schaine chuckled. "I wonder how many masks in how many kachembas look like you two."

"No doubt several of both," said Gerd. "Our Faz aren't as *Blasphemy mask: the Uldra warlocks array themselves in a burnt-clay mask in the likeness of their enemy, with whatever of his accoutrements they are able to possess, together with his castetassels; then they visit the kachemba, or secret fane, pertaining to the tribe of the enemy, and there blaspheme the tutelars of this tribe, in the expectation that the tutelars will revenge themselves upon the person represented.

docile as your Aos. Last year on the Kaneel Broads I looked into a kachemba. Sure enough, they built it to represent Suaniset."

"What about masks?"

"Just two: me and my father. My father's mask wore a red cap. Mission accomplished."

Two years before a letter from Kelse had apprised Schaine of the murder of Palo Jemasze, Gerd's father, through the instrumentality of an Uldra sky-shark.

"The tutelar in this case flying a sky-shark," Kelse observed.

Jemasze gave a curt nod. "Once or twice a week I take up my Dacy and go hunting. No luck, so far."

Schaine decided to change the subject. "Kelse, I've invited Elvo Glissam to Morningswake."

"Elvo Glissam? The SEE advocate?"

"Yes. He's never seen a wild erjin. I told him that we'd find one for him. Do you mind?"

"Why should I mind? He seems decent enough."

The three returned to the main salon. Glancing across the room Schaine noticed a tall young Uldra in the robes of an Alouan chieftain, though the robes, rather than red, or rose or pink, were unrelieved gray. He was a man remarkably handsome, with a skin blue as the sea and hair bleached glistening white. Schaine stared in shock and wonder, then turned wide-eyed to Kelse. "What is he doing here?"

"That's the Gray Prince," said

Kelse. "He's seen everywhere around Olanje."

"But how—why—"

"In some fashion," said Kelse, "he was encouraged to become the savior of his race."

Gerd Jemasze gave a snort of sardonic amusement, and Schaine became furiously angry with both. Gerd was innately a boor; Kelse had become as crabbed and obstinate as her father. . . She took command of herself. Kelse, after all, had suffered the loss of a leg and an arm. Her own loss—if 'loss' were the appropriate word—was trivial in comparison. . . The Gray Prince, swinging his gaze around the room, saw Schaine. He tilted his head forward, then jerked it back in a motion of glad surprise. He strode across the room to stand in front of Schaine.

Kelse said in a bored voice, "Hello, Muffin. What brings you here?"

The Gray Prince, throwing up his head, laughed. "Muffin no more! I must reckon with my public image." A trace of Uldra accent gave his voice a gay and urgent quality. "To the friends of my childhood I am 'Jorjol', or if you insist upon formality: 'Prince Jorjol'."

"I hardly think that we'll insist upon formality," said Kelse. "You probably remember Gerd Jemasze from Suaniset."

"I remember him most distinctly." Jorjol took Schaine's hand, bent his head and kissed it.

"You can still call me 'Muffin' if you like but—" he looked around the room; his gaze, slipping past Kelse and Gerd, relegated them to the background—"I'd prefer not here. Where have you been? Has it been five years?"

"Quite five years."

"It seems forever. So much has changed."

"You seem to have done very well for yourself. You're the talk of Olanje, so I understand—although I wasn't aware that the Gray Prince was Muffin."

"Yes, Muffin has come a vast distance, and I intend to go as far again—even at the risk of inconveniencing my old friends." His glance now included Kelse and Gerd; then he turned back to Schaine. "And what will you do now?"

"I'm returning to Mornings-wake tomorrow. We meet Father in Galigong and fly home from there."

"As an 'intransigent'?"

"What's an 'intransigent'?"

Kelse said in a bored voice: "The opposite of 'Redemptionist', or so I suppose."

Schaine said: "I'm going as myself, nothing more, and I intend to quarrel with no one."

"You might find it more difficult than you think."

Schaine smilingly shook her head. "Father and I can accommodate to each other. He's neither cruel nor unreasonable, as you well know."

"He's a force of nature! Storms,

lightning, torrents—they're not cruel nor unreasonable either, but they cannot be defeated by kindness and rationality."

Schaine laughed sadly. "And you intend to defeat my poor father?"

"I must. I am a Redemptionist. I intend to win back for my people the lands they lost to the violence of your people."

Gerd looked up toward the ceiling and turned half-away. Kelse said: "Speaking of my father, I had a letter from him today: a most curious letter. He mentions you as well. Listen. "You might be seeing that scamp Jorjol. If so, try to bring him to his senses, for his own sake. Perhaps the prospect of a career at Morningswake no longer appeals to him; tell him nevertheless that when his bubble breaks he is always welcome here, for reasons of which we are all aware."

"I have just returned from the Volwodes and I can't wait to see you. I've had some remarkable adventures and I have a wonderful story to tell you, a most wonderful joke, a most prodigious and extraordinary joke which has put ten years on my life, and which might well amuse and edify Jorjol. . . That's about all here to interest you."

Jorjol raised his bleached white eyebrows. "What kind of joke? I am not interested in jokes."

"I don't know what his joke might be; I'm anxious to find out."

Jorjol pulled at his long nose, which apparently had been surgically cropped of its drooping Uldra tip. "Uther Madduc was never a great humorist, to my recollection."

"True," said Kelse. "Still, he's a more complex person than you might think."

Jorjol reflected a minute. "I remember your father principally as a man dominated by the strictures of etiquette. Who knows what sort of person he really is?"

"External events have shaped us all," said Kelse.

Jorjol grinned, showing teeth whiter than his hair, in gleaming contrast to his blue skin. "Never! I am I, because I have willed myself thus!"

Schaine could not restrain a nervous laugh. "Heavens, Muffin—Jorjol—Gray Prince—whatever your name is—your intensity startles us all!"

Jorjol's grin diminished somewhat. "You know me for an intense person." From across the room Valtrina called him; he bowed, and with a final quick glance at Schaine took his leave.

Schaine heaved a sigh. "Quite true; he's always been intense."

Erris Sammatzen came to join them. "You seem to know the Gray Prince intimately."

"Yes, that's Muffin," said Kelse. "Father found him out at the edge of the Retent when he was little: he'd been abandoned. Father brought him home and put him into the care of an Ao bailiff,

and we all grew up together."

"Father always had a soft spot for Muffin," mused Schaine. "When we were caught in some really flagrant mischief, Kelse and I would get a whack or two, but Muffin always got off with a lecture."

"Actually," said Kelse, "that's not so much forbearance as the etiquette we just heard about. One never strikes a Blue."

Sammatzen glanced across the room to the group of Uldras. "They look pretty formidable. I don't think I'd want to strike one."

"He'd kill you with a knife, but he wouldn't strike back. Among the Uldras only women fight barehanded; women-fights are a popular spectacle."

Sammatzen looked curiously at Kelse. "You don't like the Uldras very much."

"I like some of them. Our Aos are well-behaved. Kurgech the shaman is one of Father's cronies. We've put a stop to the women-fights and a few other unpleasant customs. They still work sorcery which we can't stop."

"It would seem that Jorjol wasn't brought up as an Uldra."

"He wasn't brought up as anything. He lived with the Ao bailiff, but he took lessons with us, and played with us, and wore Gaean clothes. We really never thought of him as a Blue."

"I used to adore him," said Schaine, "especially after he saved Kelse from the erjin."

"Indeed! This was the erjin that took your arm and leg?"

Kelse gave a curt nod and would have changed the subject but Schaine said: "It happened only two miles south of the house. An erjin came around the Skåw and proceeded to tear Kelse to bits. Jorjol ran up to the beast and blew its head off with a gun, and just in time or Kelse wouldn't be here now. Father wanted to do something wonderful for Jorjol. . . ." Schaine paused, thinking back across scenes five years old. "But there were emotional problems. Jorjol went *aurau**. He ran away and we never saw him again, although we learned from Kurgech that he'd crossed into the Retent and joined the Garganche. He was originally Garganche—we knew that from his birth tattoo—so there was no question about their 'land-scouring' him."

"'Land-scouring' is what the Blues do to enemy tribesmen," remarked Kelse. "One of the things, I should say."

Schaine glanced across the room toward Jorjol. "And tonight we find him here at Villa Mirasol. We expected him to make a career for himself, but nothing like this."

Kelse said dryly, "Father had in mind head stockman, or bailiff."

"You'll have to agree," Sam-

*Aurau: untranslatable; said of a tribesman afflicted with revulsion against civilized restrictions, and sometimes of a caged animal yearning for freedom.

matzen observed, "that for an ambitious Uldra very little opportunity exists to better himself."

Gerd Jemasze snorted in sour amusement. "The ambitious Blue wants to raid or ransom or steal enough money to buy a sky-shark. He doesn't want to be a teacher or an engineer—any more than you want to ride an erjin."

"That's a yearning I'm able to control."

"Reflect a moment," Kelse told him. "The Blues can come to Szintarre whenever they want; they can attend school at Olanje and learn a profession. How many do so? Few, if any. All the Blues in Olanje are agitators and Redemptionist house-pets; they exist only to get the land-barons out of the Treaty Lands."

"They seem to feel that the land is theirs," remarked Sammatzen.

"It's theirs if they can force us off of it," said Kelse. "If they can't, it's ours."

Sammatzen shrugged and turned away. Kelse said to Schaine, "We'd better be leaving; we've got a long day tomorrow."

Schaine made no protest. With Gerd Jemasze they bade farewell to Valtrina and departed Villa Mirasol.

THE HOUR WAS LATE. Schaine was restless. She stepped out on her balcony and stood under the stars. The sea was quiet; the town had gone to sleep; a few lights twinkled up and down the shore

and through the foliage of the hillside. No sound could be heard but the sigh of the surf. . . An eventful day. Kelse, Gerd Jemasze, Aunt Val, Muffin (the Gray Prince!)—all components of her childhood, all now with their elemental natures refined and intensified. The tranquility she had come home to find seemed forever lost and gone. She brought faces into her mind. Kelse: more terse and cynical than she could have expected. Kelse had aged very quickly; all his boyish grace had departed. . . Gerd Jemasze: a hard harsh man with a soul of stone. . . Muffin, or Jorjol as now he must be called: as gallant and clever as ever. How fateful that the agency which had given him sustenance, education, even life itself—namely Morningswake—should now be the target of Redemptionist attack! . . . Elvo Glissam! Schaine felt a warm flush, a pulse of eagerness. She hoped that he would stay weeks, months, at Morningswake. She would take him up to the Opal Pits, to the Lake of the Veils, to Sanhredin Glade, to the Magic Forest and the lodge on Mount May; she would ask Kurgech to organize a Grand Karoo*. Elvo Glissam would bring

*Karoo: Uldra festivities, including feasting, music, dancing, declaiming, athletic contests. An ordinary Karoo occupies a night and a day; a Grand Karoo continues three days and nights, or longer. The Karoos of the Retent tribes are wild and often macabre.

fun to Morningswake where none had existed for five years: five bitter wasted years.

Chapter 3

ACROSS THE PERSIMMON SEA flew the Suaniset utility vehicle, an ungainly Apex A-15, lacking all style or flair and Schaine suspected that Gerd Jemasze intended nothing less than a demonstration of contempt for the fads of Olanje. She remarked: "All this is very luxurious, but where's the Hybro Saloon?"

Gerd Jemasze fixed the autopilot upon Galigong and swung around in his seat. "The Hybro is in the shop. I'm waiting for new dexodes."

Schaine remembered the Suaniset Hybro from her childhood. She asked Kelse: "I suppose Father is still flying our dilapidated Sturdevant with the broken window?"

"Yes, it's ageless. I fixed the window last year."

Schaine informed Elvo Glissam: "Out on the domains life flows at a serene pace. Our ancestors were wise and industrious; what's good enough for them is good enough for us."

"We're not altogether torpid," said Kelse. "Twelve years ago we planted two hundred acres to vines and next year we'll start producing wine."

"That sounds interesting," said Schaine. "We should be able to undersell the imports; we might

end up as tycoons of the wine trade."

Elvo Glissam said: "I thought you were all rich, with so much land and mountains and streams and minerals."

Kelse gave a wry chuckle. "We're subsistence farmers. We don't see much cash."

"Perhaps you can advise us on the lottery," suggested Schaine.

"Gladly," said Elvo Glissam. "Invest your money elsewhere. For instance, a resort marina on one of those beautiful islands down there, for the convenience of yachtsmen."

"Cruising the Persimmon Sea is a chancy business," said Kelse. "Sometimes morphotes climb aboard and kill everybody and sail the yacht away."

"That must be quite a sight," said Gerd Jemasze.

Elvo Glissam grimaced. "Koryphon is a cruel world."

"Suaniset is peaceful enough," said Gerd Jemasze.

"So is Morningswake," said Kelse. "Jorjol tries to tell our Aos how bad things are and they don't know what he's talking about. So now Jorjol does his talking in Olanje."

"Jorjol hardly seems a classical reformer," said Elvo Glissam. "He's really a most perplexing individual. What could be his motives? After all, your father was his benefactor."

Schaine sat silent. Gerd Jemasze scowled down at the Mermione Islands. Kelse said:

"There's really no great mystery. Father has a most rigid set of values. It might seem that Jorjol and Schaine and I grew up as playmates and equals, but there was never any attempt to gloss over the real situation. We were Outkers; Jerjol was a Blue. He never took a meal in the Great Hall; instead he ate in the kitchen, which I suppose rankled much more than he cared to admit. Then summers, when we visited Aunt Val in Olanje, Jorjol was sent out to learn ranch-business, because Father intended Jorjol to become head stockman."

Elvo Glissam nodded soberly and asked no more questions.

THE PINK SUN floated up the sky; the Apex broke through a shoal of cumulus to discover the loom of Uaia across the northern horizon. Details appeared through the haze: bluffs, beaches, promontories; colors gradually clarified to pale dun, ocher, black, white-buff and brown. The shore approached; a peninsula detached itself from the hulk of the continent to enclose a long narrow bight. At the tip clustered a half-dozen warehouses, a few rows of huts and cabins, a rickety hotel of white-painted timber built half over the water on a pier of a hundred crooked stilts. "Galigong," said Kelse. "The chief seaport of the Retent."

"And how far to Mornings-wake?"

"About eight hundred miles."

Kelse studied the landscape through binoculars. "I don't see the Sturdevant, but we're a bit early. The Hilgads are having a karoo at their shore-camp. I think there's a woman fight in progress." He offered the binoculars to Elvo Glissam, who was just as pleased to see only a confused surge of tall blue-faced forms in white, pink and buff robes.

The sky-car landed; the four stepped out upon the chalky soil of Uaia, and hurried across the crackling pink glare to the shelter of the hotel. They entered a dim tavern, illuminated only by a row of green glass bulls-eyes. The innkeeper came forward: a short fat Outker with a few whorls of brown hair, a splayed nubbin of a nose, melancholy brown eyes drooping at the outer corners.

Kelse asked: "Are there messages from Morningswake?"

"No sir, not a word."

Kelse looked down at his watch. "I suppose we're still a bit early." He went to the door, looked around the sky and returned. "We'll take lunch. What can you provide us?"

The innkeeper dolefully shook his head. "Very little, I fear. I might fry up a bit of spernum. There's a jar or two of preserved polyps, and I can send the boy out for a salad of rockwort. You can have that sugar tart yonder in the case, although I can't overly vouch for it."

"Well, do the best you can. Meanwhile bring us jars of cold

ale."

"As cold as may be, sir."

The lunch appeared: a meal somewhat less makeshift than the landlord's diffidence had suggested. The four sat out on the pier in the shade of the hotel, facing north across the water to the Hilgad camp. The landlord confirmed that a karoo was in progress. "But don't be tempted by curiosity; they're drunk on raki; they'd treat you very unfairly if you ventured near. Already this morning there's been three woman-fights and eight rascolades, and tonight they'll throw from the wheel." He made a sign of caution and returned into the hotel.

"These terms are all mysterious," said Elvo Glissam. "None sound appealing."

"Your instincts are accurate," said Kelse. He pointed to the sunburnt hillside. "Can you make out those little cages and hutches? That's where captives wait for ransom. After a year or two, if ransom isn't paid, the captive is brought out to run down a course. After him come warriors on erjins, armed with lances. If he reaches the other end of the course he's set free. That's rascolade. The wheel—see that tall structure with the counterweight? The counterweight is hoisted; the captive is tied to the wheel. The counterweight is cut loose; the wheel spins. At a certain point the captive is cut loose and thrown toward that jut of rock you

see offshore. Sometimes he lands in the water and the morphotes get him. The fun goes on until they run out of captives. Meanwhile they're all eating barbecued morphote and drinking skull-buster and plotting where to get more captives."

Schaine was displeased by the flavor of the conversation; she did not want Kelse and Gerd Jemasze impinging their prejudices upon Elvo Gliassam's still open mind. She said: "The Hilgad aren't representative Uldras; in fact they're pariahs."

Gerd Jemasze said: "They're pariahs because they lack traditional lands and kachembas, not because their customs are unusual."

Schaine started to point out that the remark applied only to the Retent tribes, that Treaty Uldras, such as the Morningswake Aos, were considerably less savage and ruthless; then noticing the sardonic gleam in Gerd Jemasze's eyes, she held her tongue.

The hours passed. At mid-afternoon Kelse telephoned Morningswake; on the dusty insect-spotted screen in the corner of the tavern appeared the image of Reyona Werlas-Madduc, housekeeper at Morningswake and third cousin to Schaine and Kelse. Her image flared and wavered; her voice vibrated through the antique filaments. "He's not yet at Galigong? Stars, he should be there by now; he left this morn-

ing."

"Well, he's not here. Did he mention another destination, or an errand somewhere along the way?"

"He said nothing to me. Is Schaine there? Let me say a word to dear little Schaine."

Schaine came forward and exchanged greetings with Reyona; then Kelse returned to the telephone. "If Father calls, explain that we're waiting at Galigong Hotel."

"He should be there any minute. . . Might he have stopped off at Trillium to take a glass or two with Dm. Hugo?"

"Hardly likely," said Kelse. "We'll just have to wait until he arrives."

THE AFTERNOON PASSED; the sun sank into the Persimmon Sea among flaring clouds and darting rays. Schaine, Kelse, Elvo Glissam and Gerd Jemasze sat out on the dock, facing westward over the placid water. Worry now hung in the air.

"He wouldn't be this late unless he ran into trouble," Kelse declared. "It's almost certain that he's been forced down along the way. And two-thirds of the route is over Retent land: Garganche and Hunge and Kyan."

"Why wouldn't he radio for help?" Schaine asked.

"A dozen things might have happened," said Gerd Jemasze. "We'll surely find him somewhere along the route between here and

Morningswake."

Kelse cursed under his breath. "We can't find him in the dark; we'll have to wait for morning." He went off to arrange for accommodations and returned more disconsolate than ever. "The landlord has two rooms with beds, and he'll hang up a pair of ham-mocks. But he doesn't know whether he'll be able to feed us supper."

Supper nonetheless consisted of an adequate platter of sand-creepers poached in sea-water, with a garnish of soursops and fried kale. After the meal the four went once more to sit out on the pier. In a spasm of zeal the inn-keeper threw a cloth over his bait table and served a dessert of biscuits and dried fruit, with a pot of vervena tea.

Conversation among the four dwindled. For a period the Hilgad fires burnt high, then subsided to quivering red sparks. Languid swells surging under the pier made soft sad sounds; in the sky constellations began to appear: the magnificent Griffideides, Orpheus with his lute of eight blue stars, Miraldra the Enchantress with blazing Fenim for her diadem, and low in the southeast the star-veils of Alastor Cluster. How pleasant this evening might have been, thought Schaine, had circumstances been different! She felt depressed, a mood distinct from her worry in regard to Uther Madduc. Lovely old Morningswake had become a vortex of

ugly emotions, and she was uncertain as to her ultimate sympathies. Not, she suspected, with her father, although it made no difference; she loved him anyway. Why then, she wondered, did she detest Gerd Jemasze so intensely? His opinions were identical to those of her father; he was no less resourceful and self-sufficient. She looked toward the rail where Elvo Glissam and Gerd Jemasze spoke together. Both were about the same age; both were physically personable; both were individuals with pride in their own identities. Elvo was warm-hearted, impulsive and happy; he was sympathetic and idealistic; he concerned himself with moral ultimates. In contrast Gerd Jemasze guarded his feelings behind a cool mask; his humor was sardonic; his code of ethics—if such it could be called—was based upon a self-serving pragmatism. . . . Their conversation drifted across the night; they spoke of morphotes and erjins. Schaine listened. “—somewhat peculiar,” Gerd was saying. “The palaeontologists find a fossil record of morphote evolution, all the way up from a creature similar to the creeper we ate for supper. The erjins have left no fossils. Their skeletal substance disintegrates over just a few years so that the evolutionary sequence isn’t at all clear; no one even knows how they breed.”

“Except the Wind-runners,” said Kelse.

“How do the Wind-runners

domesticate erjins? Do they capture cubs? Or work with adults?”

“Uther Madduc can tell you more than I can; he’s just come down from the Palga.”

“Maybe that’s his ‘wonderful joke’,” suggested Kelse.

Gerd Jemasze shrugged. “So far as I know, the Wind-runners hatch out erjin eggs and train the cubs. Wild erjins are telepathic; maybe the Wind-runners block off the faculty. How? I’ve no more idea than you.”

KELSE AND Gerd Jemasze elected to sleep on the ample settee of the Apex and presently took themselves off to bed. Elvo and Schaine walked out to the end of the pier, where they sat on an overturned skiff. Stars reflected along the dark water. The Hilgad fires had guttered low; from somewhere along the shore came music: quavering wails accented by plangent bass outcries. Elvo Glissam listened. “What dire sounds!”

“Blue music is never cheerful,” said Schaine. “The Blues, on the other hand, consider all our music insipid tinkling.”

The Hilgad music dwindled off into silence. The two sat listening to the wash of the waves through the piers. Schaine said: “For you this can’t be a very exciting occasion. Naturally we didn’t plan so much inconvenience.”

“Don’t speak of it! I only hope that it’s just inconvenience.”

“I hope so too. As Gerd says,

Father carries weapons, and even if his car has gone-down we'll find him tomorrow."

"Not that I'm pessimistic," said Elvo, "but how can you be so sure? It's a long way to Morningswake. There's a great deal of territory he might have flown over."

"We always fly by auto-pilot, from destination to destination, just in case our air-cars do come down. It's an elementary safety precaution. Tomorrow we'll fly back along the flight line, and unless Father deviated from course we're certain to find him." She rose to her feet. "I think I'll go to bed."

Elvo stood up and kissed her forehead. "Sleep well and don't worry—about anything."

Chapter 4

UNDER THE GRAY and rose-pink sky of dawn, the sea lay motionless. From the Hilgad camp smoke drifted across the inlet, carrying a pleasant spicy reek.

Within the tavern the landlord, grumbling and yawning, set forth a breakfast of boiled clams, porridge and tea over which the four wasted little time. Kelse paid the score; a few minutes later the Apex rose into the sky. Jemasze set the auto-pilot to the referents of Morningswake; the Apex slid off to the northwest: across the inlet, over the Hilgad camp. Warriors ran forth, leapt on their erjin mounts, stung them

into action with electric prods. Hopping, bounding, running on hind legs, massive heads thrust forward, the erjins followed below, the warriors screaming insane imprecations.

The Hilgad were left behind. The sky-car rose to clear the stony coastal slopes, then flew to an altitude of fifteen hundred feet, to allow maximum visibility right and left across that band of territory over which Uther Madduc would have passed. The Alouan spread away past the range of vision: a rolling plain splotched with clumps of gray thorn, bottle-bush, an occasional thick-trunked hag-tree with branches that seemed to claw at the air. The Apex flew slowly, the four within scanning every square foot of ground.

Miles went past, and hours; the plain sagged and became a basin swimming with heat haze and pocked with salt sinks. Ahead rose the white cliffs of the Lucimer Mountains. "Not very inviting territory," Elvo Glissam remarked, "which probably explains why it's still Retent."

Kelse grinned. "It suits the Kyan well enough. So everybody's satisfied."

"They must have simple tastes," said Elvo Glissam. "I don't see how a lizard could survive down there."

"This is dry season. The Kyan are off in those mountains there to the west. During the rains they'll migrate down into the limestone hills yonder, where

they maintain their kachembas."

"Have you ever explored a kachemba?"

Kelse shook his head. "Never. They'd kill me."

"How would they know?"

"They'd know."

Schaine said: "Since we don't invite them into our drawing-rooms, they don't ask us into their kachembas."

"Tit for tat, so to speak."

"And again," said Kelse, "everyone is well-pleased."

"Except Jorjol," said Schaine.

Flying over the Lucimer Range Jemasze reduced speed, the better to examine slopes and gulleys. Nowhere could be found a trace of Uther Madduc's Sturdevant air-car.

Beyond the Lucimers lay a rolling savannah watered by a dozen streams, which merged to become the Lelá River. A swampy thicket grew alongside the river; Jemasze slowed the Apex until it barely moved, but the Sturdevant had not come down in the swamp.

Elvo Glissam asked: "This land is still Retent?"

"Still Retent: Hunge territory. A hundred miles east is Trillium. Morningswake is still four hundred miles north."

The landscape slid below; the savannah became a dry plain covered with smokeweed. Along the horizon hulked a dozen buttes like a group of monstrous gray animals. Jemasze took the Apex higher to gain a wider vantage, but to no immediate avail.

Below passed the buttes; the countryside became a broken wasteland of dry water-courses and rocky knolls, given contrast and color by clumps of tangle-tree and jossamer and isolated ibix trees with black trunks and flapping mustard-colored foliage: a tract of land known as the Dramalfo.

Two hours after noon, close upon the edge of the Retent, with Morningswake Manor still a hundred miles north they discovered the Sturdevant. It appeared to be wrecked, as if it had fallen from a height. No sign of life was evident. Jemasze hovered over the broken black car and scanned the ground through binoculars. "There's something strange about all this." Looking westward he halted the sweep of the binoculars. "Blues—about thirty. They're riding this way."

He lowered the Apex to the wreck while Kelse studied the riders. "They're coming fast as if they know what they'll find."

"Loot."

"Which means they know that the wreck is here."

"And that means—" Jemasze looked around the sky. He jerked at the controls. "Sky-shark!"

Not fast enough. An explosion: metal cracked and groaned; the Apex shuddered and sagged by the stern. Down to the side swooped the sky-shark—a narrow platform with a curved windshield and a long concave bow-cone, which functioned both as gun and

lance on those occasions when the pilot might wish to dart low and spit an enemy.

The sky-shark swerved, rolled and went streaking high. The Apex hung dangerously down by the stern. Jemasze manipulated the controls and managed to control the rate of descent. Down swung the sky-shark; the Apex shuddered to another impact. Jemasze cursed under his breath. The ground came up to meet them; Jemasze used every ounce of thrust remaining to break the fall, almost topping the Apex over on its back.

The Apex settled upon the flinty soil. Jemasze seized a gun from a locker and jumped to the ground but the sky-shark, fleeting into the west, had disappeared.

Kelse staggered to the radio and attempted a call. "Nothing. No power."

Jemasze said, "He shot away our rear pods—to bring us down, not to kill us."

"Rather sinister," said Kelse. "We might learn more about rascolade than we want to know."

"Get the guns from the locker," said Jemasze. "There should be a grenade tube there as well."

Schaine, Elvo and Kelse joined Jemasze on the ground. Kelse went over to the wrecked Sturdevant and peered within. He returned with a grim face. "He's there. Dead."

Elvo Glissam looked in bewilderment from wrecked Sturdevant to wrecked Apex to Kelse. He

started to speak, then held his tongue. Schaine blinked back tears. Five years wasted on Tanquil; five years gone because of arrogance and pride and reckless emotions—and now she'd never see her father again.

Gerd Jemasze asked Kelse: "Did you identify the Blues?"

"Most likely Hunge. They're certainly not Ao. The erjins show a white ruff, so they're not Garganche."

"You three take shelter behind the Apex," said Jemasze. "If they come around from the north, open fire. I'm going out yonder to intercept them, and maybe reduce the odds a bit."

Kelse went behind the Apex; Schaine followed and Elvo more slowly, looking doubtfully after Jemasze who was trotting off in a half-crouch toward a knoll of compacted sand a quarter-mile west. "Why is he going out there?"

"To kill some Blues," said Kelse. "Do you know how to use this gun?"

"I'm afraid not."

"It's quite simple. Fix that yellow dot on your target and touch this button. Trajectory is automatically computed. You're shooting OB-16 explosive pellets which should take out a Blue and an erjin together."

Elvo Glissam scowled down at the gun. "Are you sure they're hostile?"

"If they're Hunge, they're hostile. They've got no business here

on the Dramalfo; this is Garganche territory. Even if they're Garganche they're hostile, unless they keep clear of us. They know the rules."

"If there are thirty of them, I wouldn't think that we have much chance. Shouldn't we try to parley with them?"

"Pointless. As for the odds, Gerd went out to even things up a bit."

Reaching the knoll, Jemasze scrambled up to a clump of dwarf ibix on the crest. The Uldras, still a mile distant, came bounding forward at full-speed, flourishing their ancient Two Star thio-manuals. Jemasze scanned the sky. No sign of the sky-shark; perhaps it hung somewhere up against the sun, unseen in the pink dazzle.

The Uldras approached and Jemasze saw that they were Hunge indeed. They came directly toward him, apparently ignoring the possibility of ambush, which suited Jemasze very well. He settled himself comfortably, arranged the grenade tube to the side, and thrust his gun forward. The Hunge bounded close; he could hear the panting cries of the erjins. Jemasze selected the leader: a tall man in flapping gray and yellow robes, with a head-dress fashioned from a human skull. He touched the trigger button, then immediately aimed and fired again, and again and again. At the explosions, the erjins squealed in outrage and halted,

digging talons into the soil. Jemasze discharged the grenade launcher at the knot of riders: a shattering blast and the survivors wheeled their mounts to the side. Jemasze rose to his feet and fired after the scattering Uldras. . . On the ground erjins lay kicking and roaring. A wounded Uldra groped for his gun and fired at Jemasze; the pellet whistled close past Jemasze's head. He lobbed across a second grenade and all motion ceased.

From above came the shock of a concussion; Jemasze knew what had occurred before he turned to look. The sky-shark had swung down from out of the sun; anticipating such a move, Kelse had fired on the sky-shark. Jemasze looked up, and as he had expected, the sky-shark was swerving and jerking, apparently out of control. Jemasze aimed and fired, without effect; the pilot applied thrust and sent the sky-shark limping into the west.

Jemasze approached the dead bodies. He counted fourteen Blue corpses; about as many had escaped. He gathered the guns, stacked them in a pile and destroyed them with a grenade, then returned to his knoll. Two miles away the surviving Hunge had halted to take counsel. The range was extreme, but Jemasze aimed his gun, and allowing a trifle for the breeze, fired, but the pellet fell short.

Jemasze returned to the wrecked air-car. Kelse, Schaine

and Elvo Glissam already were digging a grave in the sandy soil, using sticks to loosen the dirt. Kelse and Jemasze dragged the body of Uther Madduc forth and lowered it into the grave. Schaine looked off into the sky, while Elvo Glissam stood uncertainly to the side. Kelse and Gerd Jemasze filled the grave and covered it with stones. Whatever the wonderful joke, they would never hear it now from Uther Madduc.

Gerd Jemasze and Kelse sought through both the Sturdevant and the Apex, bringing forth Uther Madduc's weapons and the contents of the water tank: about three gallons. The Apex yielded a map, a compass, binoculars, several packets of emergency rations and another four gallons of water. "We've got about a hundred miles to go; four or five days cross-country," said Jemasze. "We're not in bad shape—if the Blues don't come back. I fear that they will. Keep your eyes open for dust or movement along the skyline."

Elvo Glissam asked: "We can't call for help by radio?"

"No change whatever," said Jemasze. "Our power-banks are gone. The attacker apparently wanted to take us alive."

Kelse shouldered his pack. "The sooner we start, the sooner we arrive."

Schaine looked him over dubiously. "Will your leg hold up?"

"I hope so."

The four set off to the north,

and had proceeded only a mile when the Hunge reappeared on the skyline. They ranged themselves into a line: sixteen silhouettes on restive erjins, arms groping forward, great bearded heads out-thrust, and above, straddling sling-saddles, the Hunge warriors. They looked across the plain without display or gesture in a silence more sinister than cries and whoops. Elvo Glissam asked uncertainly: "If they attack—what are we supposed to do?"

"They won't attack," said Kelse shortly. "Not here; their old Two Stars don't have the range. They'll wait for an ambush, or they might try to take us by night."

Jemasze pointed ahead to a set of grotesque sandstone pinnacles carved by the wind. "And there's good ambush country."

"I make it about ten miles," said Kelse. "Say three hours, or an hour before sunset."

The four trudged onward across the waste. The Uldras watched for two minutes, then swung their mounts about and riding northward disappeared behind the skyline.

Schaine spoke to Elvo Glissam: "You'll long remember your visit to Uaia."

"If I live to think about it."

"Oh, you'll live. Gerd Jemasze will see to that. His self-esteem would suffer if anything happened to us."

Elvo Glissam glanced at her sideways but made no comment.

As they walked Kelse and Gerd

Jemasze exchanged muttered comments, and occasionally indicated one or another aspect of the landscape. In the shade of a sprawling hag-tree they halted to rest. Kelse said to Elvo Glissam and Schaine: "We've got to keep clear of those buttes ahead, because the Blues could get up within range of us. The butte on the far right is somewhat safer, with open ground to the side. We'll pass around it to the east."

The four trudged onward through the hot afternoon. Schaine noticed that Kelse's limp was becoming more noticeable. . . They came to a dry watercourse a hundred yards across, with a sandy bed and banks supporting a growth of poison cassander and junkberry bushes. Jemasze signaled a halt, and drew the group into the shade of the purple cassander foliage. "They might have ridden ahead of us and crossed the gully. If so they're waiting behind the far bank, to get us as we cross. . . We'd better continue along this side for a mile or two."

"Then what?" demanded Elvo Glissam.

"Then we'll see how the land lies."

They continued, wary and uneasy. A half-mile along Jemasze pointed to tracks on the sand of the river-bed. "There's where they crossed. They're over there now, waiting for us." He reflected a moment. "You three continue along the bank, as far as that big jossamer tree."

The three set off. Jemasze crouched low and slid away to where he could not be seen from the opposite bank, then loped back the way they had come. He went three hundred yards, then cautiously returned to the top of the bank. He looked behind him, then scanned the opposite bank. He saw no movement; he felt no tension of danger. He waited another minute, then slid down into the watercourse and ran crouching across the pink sand and quartz pebbles toward the opposite side, every instant expecting the impact of a bullet, although both his reason and his instinct assured him that the Hunge had left none to guard this area of the watercourse. Without molestation he gained the far bank and gratefully climbed into the cover of the junkberry bushes. Gaining the top of the bank he looked north and, as he expected, discovered the party of Hunge approximately opposite the big jossamer tree where Kelse, Schaine and Elvo Glissam waited. Jemasze returned to the river-bed and keeping close under the shrubbery, ran north a hundred yards, then made another reconnaissance. Still too far. He returned to the river-bed and ran crouching another hundred yards. Now, when he clambered up through the vegetation the Hunge were barely a hundred yards distant.

He watched a moment, selecting the rider who now seemed to be the leader. He aimed his gun

and without further ado opened fire. Three Blues fell sprawling to the soil; erjins screamed in fury and shock. The survivors jerked instantly into flight. They crashed down through the shrubbery into the river-bed and charged at a zig-zag toward the jossamer tree, shooting as they rode.

Kelse instantly opened fire. He looked toward Elvo Glissam who lay looking in numb fascination toward the charging Hunge. "Shoot, man, shoot!"

Elvo Glissam shook his head in distress, then gritting his teeth fired the gun.

Pellets sang over their heads; the river-bed seemed littered with flapping erjins and dying Blues. Five still survived and clambered up through the shrubbery. Schaine and Kelse fired at point-blank range; three neared the top of the bank. Elvo Glissam, motivated by a complex mixture of outrage, humiliation, fear and fury, gave an inarticulate yell of passion and hurled himself upon the back of one of the Blues and tore him down from his mount. The two thrashed among the junkberries; the erjin, roaring and hissing, stamped upon them both, then bounded down into the watercourse and away on enormous exultant strides. The Blue drew his dagger and slashed at Elvo's arm which encircled his neck. Jemasze, arriving on the scene, clubbed the Blue with the butt of his gun, and the Blue sprawled back into the bushes.

Silence, except for panting and the sounds of riderless erjins trying to dislodge their fang-guards and electric gyves against the rocks. Elvo Glissam sat staring at the blood flowing from his forearm. Schaine uttered an exclamation and went to help him. Kelse produced a flask of all-purpose medicament and sprayed the wounds, which almost instantly stopped bleeding. When the protective membrane had formed, Schaine poured water over Elvo's arms and washed away the blood. In a shaky voice he said: "Sorry to be so bemused; I'm afraid I've led a sheltered life."

"Shock has nothing to do with a sheltered life," said Schaine. "It can happen to anyone. You're very brave."

Jemasze went back for his pack; the party once more set out toward the north, leaving behind the dry watercourse and the Blue corpses.

Methuen sank behind the far Lucimers; the four made camp on the slope of a butte. To avoid attracting the attention of such Uldras who might still be near, they built no fire, and supped on emergency rations and water. The sky faded through phases of vermilion, scarlet, ruby and purple; dusk fell across the landscape. Schaine went to sit by Elvo Glissam. "How is your arm?"

Elvo looked down at the gash. "It aches a bit, but it could be far worse. I also resent that erjin

kicking me in the ribs."

Schaine said gloomily: "I wonder if you'll ever forgive me for inviting you to Morningswake."

Elvo Glissam replied and in so doing initiated a conversation which, when later he consulted his recollections, seemed more unreal and incongruous than any other aspect of the adventure.

"I forgive you right now," said Elvo Glissam. "If nothing else, the trip is an education. I see myself from a new perspective."

Schaine objected vigorously. "Not at all. The surroundings have changed. You're the same!"

"It amounts to the same thing. Delicate sensibilities are small assistance when a person is fighting for his life."

Schaine glanced from Kelse, propped against a tree-trunk with what she suspected to be a half-smile on his face, to Gerd Jemasze who sat on the flat rock, arms around knees brooding across the twilight; and she felt impelled to put Elvo Glissam's self-deprecation into proper perspective. "In civilized surroundings it's not necessary to fight for your life."

Kelse chuckled mirthlessly. Schaine looked at him coldly. "Did I say something foolish?"

"A fire department isn't necessary except when there's a fire."

"Civilization is a very normal ordinary condition," said Schaine. "Civilized people don't need to fight for their lives."

"Not often," said Kelse laconi-

cally. "But you can't kill a Blue by invoking an abstraction."

"Did I suggest as much?"

"In a manner of speaking."

"I agree that I must be confused, since I have no such recollection."

Kelse shrugged and raised his eyes to the sky, as if to indicate that he did not care to pursue the topic any further. But he said, "You used the word 'civilization', which means a set of abstractions, symbols, conventions. Experience tends to be vicarious; emotions are predigested and electrical; ideas become more real than things."

Schaine was taken somewhat aback. She said: "That's rather all-inclusive."

"I don't think so," said Kelse mildly.

Elvo Glissam said, "I can't understand your objection to ideas."

"I can't either," said Schaine. "I think Kelse is indulging in whimsy."

"Not altogether," said Kelse. "Urban folk, dealing as they do in ideas and abstractions, become conditioned to unreality. Then, wherever the fabric of civilization breaks, these people are as helpless as fish out of water."

Elvo Glissam heaved a sigh. "What could be more unreal than sitting out here in the wilderness discussing civilization? I can't believe it. In passing, I might point out that Kelse's remarks indicate considerable skill in urbane and civilized abstraction."

Kelse laughed. "Also in passing, I might mention that urbane folk make up the membership of the Redemptionist Alliance, the Vitatis Cult, the Cosmic Peace Movement, Panortheism, a dozen more—all motivated by abstractions four or five or six times removed from reality."

"'Reality' so-called, is itself an abstraction." Elvo Gliassam remarked.

"It's an abstraction with a difference, because it can hurt, as when your sky-car comes down in the wilderness with a hundred miles to walk. That's real. Aunt Val's chamber of winds at Villa Mirasol isn't real."

Schaine said: "You're simply beating a horse to death. Because a person can deal with ideas doesn't signify that, ergo, he's helpless."

"In an urban environment, he's quite safe; in fact, he prospers. But such environments are fragile as cobwebs, and when they break: chaos!"

Gerd Jemasze joined the conversation. "Reflect on human history."

"I've done so," said Kelse. "History describes the destruction of a long series of urban civilizations because the citizens preferred intellectualism and abstraction to competence in basic skills, such as self-defense. Or attack, for that matter."

Schaine said in disgust: "You've become awfully crabbed and illiberal, Kelse. Father certainly

stamped his opinions upon you."

"Your theory has its obverse," said Elvo Gliassam. "From this viewpoint, history becomes a succession of cases in which barbarians, renouncing crassness, develop a brilliant civilization."

"Usually destroying older civilizations in the process," remarked Kelse.

"Or exploiting other less capable barbarians. Uaia is a case in point. Here a group of civilized men attacked and plundered the barbarians. The barbarians were helpless in the face of energy weapons and sky-cars—all contrived through the use of abstractions, and, incidentally, built by urbanites."

Gerd Jemasze chuckled, a sound which annoyed Schaine. She said, "These are merely facts."

"But not all the facts. The barbarians weren't plundered; they use their lands as freely as before. I must concede that torture and slavery have been discouraged."

"Very well then," said Elvo Gliassam. "Imagine yourself an Uldra: disenfranchised and subject to alien law. What would you do?"

Gerd Jemasze pondered a moment or two. "I suppose it would depend on what I wanted. What I wanted I'd try to get."

BEFORE DAWN the party was astir and away. A great reef of clouds obscured the east and the party walked in maroon gloom. At noon

lightning began to strike down at the buttes, now lonely shapes in the southern distance, and draughts of dank air blew north across the plain. Halfway into the afternoon a rain-squall raced past, drenching the group to the skin and laying the dust; shortly after the sun found gaps in the clouds and sent remarkable pink rays slanting down at the ground. Jemasze led the way, accomodating his pace to that of Kelse, whose limp had become somewhat more pronounced. Schaine and Elvo Glissam sauntered along to the rear. Had the circumstances been different, had her father been alive and Kelse not so obviously contriving each separate step by an effort of will, she might almost have enjoyed the adventure.

The land sloped down into a sink paved with pale hardpan. At the far verge stood a cluster of sandstone pinnacles and beyond an irregular scarp of pink, mauve and russet sandstone. Schaine called ahead to Kelse: "There's Bottom Edge!"

"Almost like home," said Kelse.

Schaine excitedly told Elvo Glissam: "Morningswake starts at the brink of the cliff. Beyond is our land—all the way north to the Volwodes."

Elvo Glissam shook his head in sad disapproval, and Schaine looked at him wonderingly. She thought a moment, reflecting upon what she had said, then laughed but made no comment.

Clearly she was not a Redemptivist by instinct, or by innate conviction. . . . How to reconcile her love for Morningswake with the guilty suspicion that she had no right to the property? Kelse and Gerd Jemasze had no such qualms. On an impulse she asked Elvo Glissam: "Suppose you owned Morningswake: what would you do?"

Elvo Glissam smiled and shook his head. "It's always easier to relinquish somebody else's property. . . . I'd like to believe that my principles would dominate my avarice."

"So you'd give up Morningswake?"

"I honestly don't know. I hope that's what I'd do."

Schaine pointed toward a cluster of tung-beetle mounds about a hundred yards west. "Look: in the shadow to the right! You wanted to see a wild erjin—there it is!"

The erjin stood seven feet tall, with massive arms banded with stripes of black and yellow fur. Tufts of stiff golden fiber stood above the head; folds of gunmetal cartilage almost concealed the four small eyes in the neck under the jutting frontal bone. The creature stood negligently, showing neither fear nor hostility. Gerd Jemasze and Kelse became aware of the beast. Kelse stared in fascination, and slowly brought forth his gun.

Elvo asked in dismay: "Is he going to shoot it? It's such a magnificent creature!"

"He's always hated erjins—worse since he lost his arm and leg."

"But this one isn't threatening us. It's almost murder."

Gerd Jemasze suddenly turned and fired to the east at a pair of erjins lunging forward from a thicket of grease-bush. One sprawled forward and fell only four feet from Schaine and Elvo Glissam, to lay with great six-fingered hands twitching; the other jerked up into a grotesque backward somersault and fell with a thump. The first erjin, who had acted as a decoy, slipped behind the tung mounds before Kelse could aim his gun. Jemasze ran off to the side to get another shooting angle, but the creature had disappeared.

Elvo Glissam stood looking down at the quivering hulk of the near erjin. He noticed the hand-palps, as sensitive as human fingers, and the talons which extended themselves when the erjin made a fist. He examined the tuft of bronze bristles on the scalp, which some authorities declared to be telepathy receptors. Another bound and the creature would have been at his throat. In a subdued voice he said to Gerd Jemasze, "That was a close call. . . Do the erjins often use tricks like that?"

Jemasze nodded curtly. "They're intelligent brutes, and unforgiving. How they can be domesticated is a mystery to me."

"Maybe the secret was Uther

Madduc's 'wonderful joke'."

"I don't know. I plan to find out."

Kelse asked: "How do you propose to do that?"

"As soon as we get to Morningswake we'll fly back to the Sturdevant and rescue the log," said Gerd Jemasze. "Then we'll have an idea where he went."

The afternoon waned. At sunset the party camped among the sandstone pinnacles, with the southern edge of Morningswake Domain still three miles to the north. Jemasze stalked, killed and cleaned a ten pound bustard, the wild descendant of fowl imported from beyond the stars. Schaine and Elvo Glissam gathered fuel and built a fire, and the four toasted chunks of the bird on twigs.

"Tomorrow we'll find water," said Gerd. "Three or four streams cross South Morningswake, so I recall."

"It's about ten miles to South Station," said Kelse. "There's a windmill and maybe a few stores there. But no radio, worse luck."

"Where are the Aos?"

"They might be anywhere, but I suspect they're moving north. No help for it, we've still got sixty miles to go."

"How's your leg holding up?"

"Not too good. But I'll get there."

Elvo Glissam leaned back and lay staring up at the stars. His own life, he thought, seemed relatively simple compared to that

of a land-baron. . . Schaine! What went on in her mind? One moment she seemed intensely subtle and sympathetic, the naive, then caught up in some emotion beyond his knowing. Beyond question she was brave and kind and cheerful. He could well imagine passing the rest of his life in her company. . . At Mornings-wake? He was not so sure. Would she agree to live elsewhere? He was not sure of this either. . . Three days more of this arduous marching. He wished he could in some manner help Kelse. Perhaps in the morning he'd inconspicuously take part of Kelse's back-pack and hang it on his own.

IN THE MORNING Elvo Glissam put his plan into effect. Kelse noticed and protested, but Elvo Glissam said: "This is just simple common-sense. You're already working twice as hard as I am, and it's in everybody's interest that you stay healthy."

Gerd Jemasze said, "Glissam's right, Kelse. I'd rather carry your pack than carry you."

Kelse said no more; the group set forth, and an hour later reached the base of the South Rim. By a dry gulch they ascended five hundred feet, then toiled another hundred feet up a face of rotting conglomerate and finally stood at the lip. Behind spread the Retent, melting into the southern haze; ahead the ground fell away to a pleasant valley grown with green-gum,

dragon-eye, slender black-green gadroon, and copses of orange vandalia. A mile to the north the sunlight glinted on a shallow pond. "Morningswake!" cried Schaine huskily. "We're home."

"With about sixty miles to go," said Kelse.

Jemasze looked back over the retent. "We're past the worst of it. The going should be easier."

THERE WAS A DAY of silent trudging across the south prairie; another day was spent toiling up and down the Tourmaline Hills. Kelse now moved in awkward hops and lurches. There was a long sweaty morning in the marsh north of Skyflower Lake. At noon the party struggled through a thicket of coarse vines to reach solid terrain. They halted to rest. Kelse looked ahead. "Fourteen more miles. . . We'll never make it tonight. Perhaps you'd better go on to the house and send a wagon back for me."

"I'll wait here with you," said Schaine. "It's a good idea."

Gerd Jemasze said: "It would be a good idea—except that we're being kept under observation." He pointed toward the sky. "Three times in the last two days I've seen a sky-shark hanging in the clouds."

All stared toward the sky. "I don't see anything," said Schaine.

"Right now he's in the fold of that cumulus cloud."

"But what could he want? If he's hostile, why doesn't he try to

shoot us?"

"I would guess that he wants to take us alive. Or some of us alive. If we separated, the chances would be much improved. There might even be another party of Hunge on the way to intercept us before we reach Morningswake."

Schaine said in a hushed voice: "Would they dare come in so far from the Retent? Our Aos would kill them."

"The sky-shark would observe the Aos and provide warning."

Elvo Glissam licked his lips. "I wouldn't care to be captured now. Or even killed."

Kelse struggled to his feet. "Let's get started."

Twenty minutes later Gerd Jemasze once more searched the landscape. Looking to the northwest he became still. He lowered the binoculars and pointed. "Uldras. About twenty."

Schaine peered wearily through the pink dust-haze. More fighting, more killing; and in this region of thickets and clumps of vandalia there was small hope—in fact, no hope—of beating off an attack. Fourteen miles to Morningswake. So near and so far.

Elvo Glissam had arrived at the same conclusion. His face became pinched and gray; a husky sound forced its way up his throat.

Gerd Jemasze looked through the binoculars again. "They're riding criptids."

Schaine released her pent breath. "They're Aos!"

Gerd Jemasze nodded. "I can

make out their head-dress. White plumes. They're Ao."

Schaine's breath came in a rasping guttural sob. Elvo Glissam asked in a soft strained voice: "Are they hostile?"

"No," said Kelse shortly.

The riders approached, raising a trail of dust behind them. Gerd Jemasze studied the sky through his binoculars. "There he goes!" He pointed to a minute mark among the clouds, which drifted slowly west, then picked up speed and presently disappeared.

The Aos rode in a ritual circle around the group, the soft-footed criptids* running easily and low to the ground. They halted; an old man, somewhat shorter and more sturdy than the ordinary Uldra, dismounted and came forward. Schaine took his hand. "Kurgech! I've come home to Morningswake."

Kurgech touched the top of her head, a gesture half-caress, half-formal salute. "It gives us pleasure to see you home, Mistress."

Kelse said: "Uther Madduc is dead. He was shot down over the Dramalfo by a sky-shark."

Kurgech's gray face—he wore no azure oil—showed no twitch of emotion, and Schaine surmised that the information had already reached his mind. She asked: "Do you know who killed my father?"

"The knowledge has not come

*Criptid: a long low pad-footed variant of the terrestrial horse. The Uldras of the Retent disdain criptids as mounts fit only for wittols, sexual deviates and women.

to me.”

Kelse, hobbling forward, said hoarsely: “Search for the knowledge, Kurgech. When it comes—tell me.”

Kurgech gave a curt nod which might have meant anything, then turned and signaled to four of the tribesmen, who dismounted and brought their mounts forward. Gerd Jemasze half-lifted Kelse into the saddle. Schaine told Elvo Glissam: “Just sit quietly and hang on; it doesn’t need guidance.”

She herself mounted, as did Gerd Jemasze and the four Aos mounted double. The party rode north, toward Morningswake.

Two hours later, past the Skaw and across the South Savanna, Schaine saw her home. She blinked back tears; unable to restrain pent-up emotion any longer. She looked at Kelse, who rode beside her. His face was strained with pain and as gray as Kurgech’s; his eyes also glistened with tears. Gerd Jemasze’s dark face was unreadable; who could fathom this man? Elvo Glissam, far too polite to betray any excesses of relief, rode in grave silence. Schaine watched him covertly. For all his lack of wilderness craft, he had by no means disgraced himself. Kelse clearly liked him and even Gerd Jemasze treated him with civility. When he left Uaia and returned to Olanje, he would have memories to last him a lifetime.

And there ahead: Mornings-

wake, serene among tall frail green-gums and lordly transtellar oaks, with the brimming, Chip-chap flowing to the side: the landscape of a dear reverie; a place forever precious; and tears once more flooded Schaine’s eyes.

Chapter 5

ACROSS TWO HUNDRED YEARS Morningswake had been built and rebuilt, extended, remodeled, subjected to a dozen different modifications and improvements as each land-baron in turn attempted to impinge some trace of his identity upon the hereditary manse. Morningswake therefore lacked a definable style, and showed a different aspect from each perspective. The roof of the central structure stood tall and steep, with a dozen high-pitched dormers, a curious little observation deck overlooking Wild Crake Pond, and along the high central ridge a line of black iron ghost-chasers in the shape of trefoils. From either flank extended a rambling two-story wing with verandahs at each level; the double colonnades were overgrown with arabella vine. The framing timbers were gadroon from Fairy Forest; the exterior clapboards were green-gum, equally durable; the interior stairs, balusters, floors, moldings and wainscotings were ironwood, pearl sachuli, verbane, Szintarre teak. The chandeliers, furniture and rugs

had been imported, not from Olanje (the products of which were considered cheap and unsubstantial), but from one of the far Old Worlds.

The central structure enclosed the Great Hall which was the heart of Morningswake, where the family celebrated important occasions, entertained guests and took its evening meal in an atmosphere which Schaine remembered as portentously formal. Everyone dressed for dinner; the table was laid with fine porcelain, silver and crystal; the conversation was confined to dignified subjects and lapses of decorum were not tolerated. As a child Schaine had found these dinners tedious and she could never understand why Muffin was not allowed to dine in the Great Hall where his fancies and drolleries would certainly have enlivened matters. But Muffin was excluded, and dined alone in the kitchen.

When Schaine was eleven, her mother drowned in a boating accident on Shadow Lake and dinners in the Great Hall became subdued, rather than merely decorous, and Uther Madduc inexplicably—to Schaine—turned gruff and unreasonable; frequently she had been aroused to anger and even rebellion. Not that she did not love her father; Schaine was too warm not to love everything connected with her life; still Schaine had decided that her father must be taught a lesson on how to get along with people, and

how not to be so arrogant with the Uldras, specifically poor Muffin.

Uther Madduc at this time had been a man of remarkable appearance, straight and tall, with thick gray hair worn in a style of elegant simplicity, clear gray eyes, features of classical regularity. He had been neither easy nor gregarious. Schaine remembered him as a man of brooding imagination and sudden impulses, simultaneously calm and restless, lacking all talent or taste for frivolity. His rare angers were cold and controlled, and diminished without perceptible aftermath; neither Schaine nor Kelse had ever incurred punishment at his hands except possibly on that last climactic night—if being sent to an expensive boarding school on Tanquil could be reckoned as punishment. Really, thought Schaine, I was an arrogant feckless self-important little wretch. . . . And yet, and yet. . . .

KELSE AND Gerd Jemasze had blown south in the Morningswake cargo carrier to salvage the Apex and the Sturdevant. With them flew two of Gerd Jemasze's cousins and a pair of Ao ranchhands. An automatic cannon had been mounted on the cargo deck, to fend off sky-shark attacks. Elvo Glissam had not been invited to join the party, and he had not volunteered his services; instead he and Schaine enjoyed a leisurely breakfast under the green-

gums. Elvo Glissam told Schaine: "By no means feel that you must entertain me; I know that you have a hundred things on your mind."

Schaine grinned. "I'm not worried about entertaining you. I've already shown you a wild erjin, as I said I'd do—and whatever the hundred affairs on my mind, I don't intend to consider them for several days, if ever. In fact, I may very well decide to do nothing at all for the next month or two."

"When I think back now," said Elvo Glissam, "I can't believe it all happened. And yet it did."

"It's certainly one way of getting acquainted," said Schaine. "On a five day march, a certain intimacy is almost unavoidable."

"Yes. At least with you, and with Kelse. Gerd Jemasze—I don't know. He puzzles me."

"Me no less, and I've known him all my life."

"I'd swear that he enjoys killing Uldras," said Elvo Glissam. "It seems churlish to cavil at his motives. He brought us home alive—as you predicted."

"He's not bloodthirsty," said Schaine. "He just doesn't consider the Hunge human beings, especially when they're attacking us."

"He amazes me," said Elvo Glissam thoughtfully. "Killing just isn't one of my skills."

"You did yourself credit," said Schaine. "Kelse and Gerd both respect you, and I do too, so don't go agonizing over imaginary

deficiencies."

"Oh, I'm not agonizing. Still, I can't believe that I did anything noteworthy."

"You made no complaints. You did your share and usually more of whatever work was needful; you were always cheerful. I think that's all very commendable."

Elvo Glissam made a careless gesture. "Inconsequentialities. I'm back in an environment I prefer, and whatever good qualities I possess will go back into hiding."

Schaine looked off across the South Savanna. "Do you really like it here at Morningswake?"

"Yes, of course."

"And you're not bored?"

"Not with you here." Elvo Glissam's glance was unmistakably ardent.

Schaine smiled absently off across the distance. "It's been very quiet at Morningswake since my mother died. Before there were parties every week. We always had guests, from other domains, from Olanje, or even off-planet. Several times a year the Aos would organize a karoo. Often we'd go up to Twin Lake Lodge, or Snowflower Lodge in the Suaniset Crag. There was always excitement and fun—before my mother died. You mustn't think that we live like hermits."

"And then?"

"Father became—well, 'recluse' is too strong a word. Then I went off to Tanquil, and for the last five years Morningswake has been very quiet. Kelse says that

Father's closest friend has been Kurgech!"

"And now?"

"I'd like Morningswake to be a happy place again."

"Yes. That would be pleasant. Except. . ." Elvo Glissam paused.

"Except what?"

"I suspect that the days of the great domains are numbered."

Schaine grimaced. "What a dismal thought."

KELSE AND Gerd Jemasze returned to Morningswake towing the hulks of the Apex and the Sturdevant on float pods. A coffin of white glass contained the body of Uther Madduc, and Kelse carried a notebook which he had found in a locker.

Two days later a funeral took place, and Uther Madduc was buried in the family graveyard, across the Chip-chap River in the park beside the Fairy Forest. Two hundred family friends, relatives and folk from neighboring domains came to pay their last respects to Uther Madduc.

Elvo Glissam watched in fascination, marveling at the conduct of these folk so different from himself. The men, he thought, were a matter-of-fact lot, while the women lacked a certain quality he could not quite define. Frivolity? Mischief? Artfulness? Even Schaine seemed rather more direct than he might have preferred, leaving small scope for teasing or flirtation or any of the subtle games which made urban

society so amusing. Worse? Better? Adaptation to the environment? Elvo Glissam only knew for certain that he found Schaine as beautiful as some magnificent natural process, like a sunrise, or a surge of breaking surf, or stars in the midnight sky.

He met dozens of folk: cousins, aunts, uncles, with their sons and daughters, and fathers and mothers, and cousins, aunts and uncles, none of whom he remembered. He saw no evidence of grief, nor even fury against the assassin; the prevailing mood seemed, rather, a grim smoulder which in Elvo Glissam's opinion boded ill for any accomodation with the Redemptionists.

He listened to a conversation between Kelse Madduc and Lilo Stenbaren of Doradus Domain. Kelse was speaking: "—not a random act. There was planning involved, and precise calculation. First Uther Madduc and then ourselves."

"What of the 'wonderful joke' of the letter? Is there some connection?"

"Impossible to say. We've taken the auto-pilot from the Sturdevant and we'll trace my father's route, and perhaps join him in his 'wonderful joke' yet."

Kelse brought Elvo Glissam forward and performed an introduction. "I'm sorry to say that Elvo Glissam, without shame, admits himself a Redemptionist."

Dm. Stenbaren laughed. "Forty years ago I remember a 'Society

for Uaian Justice', ten years later a 'League Against the Land-looters', and sometime afterward a group which simply called itself 'Apotheosis'. And now of course the Redemptionists."

"All of which reflects a deep and lasting concern," remarked Elvo Glissam. 'Decency' 'security against pillage' 'justice' 'restoration of sequestered property' are timeless concepts."

"Concepts don't bother us," said Dm. Stenbaren. "So far as I am concerned, you may continue to harbor them."

ON THE MORNING after the funeral a sparkling blue Hermes sky-boat, with silver flare-bars and a jaunty four-foot probe, swooped out of the sky and, ignoring the landing area to the side, came down on the promenade directly before Morningswake Manor.

Schaine, looking forth from the library, noticed the sky-boat on the neatly dressed gravel and reflected that Kelse would be irritated, especially since the occupant was Jorjol, who should have known better.

Jorjol jumped to the ground and stood a moment surveying Morningswake with the air of a person contemplating purchase. He wore a pale leather split-skirt, hide sandals, a rock-crystal sphere on his right big toe, the 'revelry-bonnet' of a Garganche bravo: an intricate contrivance of silver rods on which Jorjol's white-bleached hair was tied and twined and tas-

seled. Fresh azure oil had been applied to his face; his skin shone as blue as the enamel of his Hermes.

Schaine shook her head in amused vexation for Jorjol's bravado. She went out on the front piazza to meet him. He came forward, took her hands, bent forward and kissed her forehead. "I learned of your father's death, and felt that I must come to express my sentiments."

"Thank you, Jorjol. But yesterday was the funeral."

"Pshaw. I would have found you occupied with dozens of the dullest people imaginable. I wished to express myself to you."

Schaine laughed tolerantly. "Very well, express yourself."

Jorjol cocked his head and inspected Schaine sharply. "In reference to your father, condolence is of course in order. He was a strong man, and a man to be respected—even though, as you know, I stand opposite to his views."

Schaine nodded. "Do you know, he died before I had a chance to speak to him. I came home hoping to find him a softer easier man."

"Softer? Easier? More reasonable? More just? Hah!" Jorjol threw his fine head back as if in defiance. "I think not. I doubt if Kelse intends to alter by so much as a whit. Where is Kelse?"

"He's in the office, going over accounts."

Jorjol looked up and down the

quaint old façade of Mornings-wake. "The house is as pleasant and inviting as ever. I wonder if you know how lucky you are."

"Oh yes indeed."

"And I am committed to bringing this era to an end."

"Come now, Jorjol, you can't deceive me. You're just Muffin in fancy clothes."

Jorjol chuckled. "I must admit that I came half to express sympathy and half—rather more than half—to see you. To touch you." He took a step forward. Schaine retreated.

"You mustn't be impulsive, Jorjol."

"Aha! but I'm not impulsive! I'm determined and wise, and you know how I feel about you."

"I know how you *felt* about me," said Schaine, "but that was five years ago. Let me go tell Kelse you're here. He'll want to see you."

Jorjol reached out, took her hand. "No. Let Kelse drudge among the accounts. I came to see you. Let's walk by the river where we can be alone."

Schaine glanced down at the long blue hand, with the long fingers and black fingernails. "It's almost lunch-time, Jorjol. Perhaps after lunch. You'll stay, won't you?"

"I will be happy to lunch with you."

"I'll go find Kelse. And here's Elvo Glissam, whom you met at Aunt Val's. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Schaine went to the office. Kelse looked up from the calculator. "Jorjol is here."

Kelse nodded shortly. "What does he want?"

"He made a nice speech in regard to Father. I've invited him to lunch."

Into their field of vision came Jorjol and Elvo Glissam on the lawn under the clump of parasol trees. Kelse grunted, and rose to his feet.

"I'll come out and talk to him. We'll take lunch on the east terrace."

"Wait, Kelse. Let's be nice to Jorjol. He deserves to be treated like any other guest. It's a warm day and the Hall would be perfectly suitable."

Kelse said patiently: "In two hundred years no Uldra has entered our Great Hall. I don't care to break this tradition. Not even for Jorjol."

"But it's a cruel tradition and not worth keeping. We're not bigots, you and I—even if Father was. Let's live our lives more reasonably."

"I am not a bigot; I am very reasonable indeed. In fact, I realize that Jorjol cunningly chose this time—today—to try to force a submission upon us. He won't succeed."

"I can't understand you!" cried Schaine in a passion. "We've known Jorjol since we were little. He saved your life at risk of his own and it's absolutely absurd that he can't have lunch with us

as any ordinary person might."

With raised eyebrows Kelse looked Schaine up and down. "I'm surprised that you don't understand the significance of all this. We hold Morningswake not through the forbearance of others, but because we are strong enough to protect what is ours."

Schaine said in disgust: "You've been talking to Gerd Jemasze. He's worse even than Father."

"Schaine my naive little sister, you simply don't understand what's going on."

Schaine controlled her exasperation. "I know this: Jerjol the Gray Prince is welcome anywhere in Olanje; it seems strange that he can't be treated equally well here, where he grew up."

"Circumstances are different," said Kelse patiently. "In Olanje there's nothing to lose; the folk can afford the luxury of abstract principles. We're Outkers in the middle of the Alouan; if we falter, we're done."

"What's that got to do with treating Jorjol in a civilized manner?"

"Because he's not here in a civilized manner! He's here as a Blue of the Retent. If he came here in Outker clothes, using Outker manners and not reeking of azure oil—in other words, if he came here as an Outker, then I would treat him as an Outker. But he doesn't do this. He comes flaunting his Uldra clothes, his blue skin, his Redemptionist bias—in short, he challenges me.

I react. If he wants to enjoy Outker privileges, such as dining in our Great Hall, then he must make himself respectable by my standards. It's as simple as that."

Schaine could think of nothing to say. She turned away. Kelse said to her back: "Go talk to Kurgech; ask his opinion. In fact, we'll ask Kurgech to join us for lunch."

"Now you're really trying to offend Jorjol."

Kelse uttered a wild bitter laugh. "You want it both ways! We mustn't invite one Uldra because that would offend another."

"You don't reckon with Jorjol's opinion of himself: his self-image."

"And he intends to make me accept this self-image. I won't do it. I didn't invite him here; since he comes of his own volition, then he must adapt himself to us, not we to him."

Schaine stalked from the room, and returned to the front piazza. "Kelse is up to his ears in the accounts," she told Jorjol. "He sends his apologies and he looks forward to seeing you at lunch. . . . Let's all walk out to the river."

Jorjol's face twitched. "Certainly; just as you like. In fact, I'll enjoy revisiting the scenes of my most happy childhood."

THE THREE WANDERED up the river to Shadow Lake where Uther Madduc had built a boat-house to house three skimmer sailboats. Elvo Glissam was his

usual self; Jorjol's mood altered each minute. At times he prattled nonsense, as light-hearted and charming as Elvo Glissam, then he would sigh and become melancholy over some reminiscence of his childhood, only to turn on Elvo Glissam to argue some minor point with fierce intensity. Schaine watched him in fascination, wondering at the emotions which surged through the proud narrow skull. She would not have wished to walk out alone with Jorjol; he would certainly have become ardent.

Jorjol resented Elvo Glissam's presence, and disguised the fact with obvious effort. Once or twice Schaine thought that he was on the verge of asking Elvo Glissam to leave, at which times she quickly intervened.

Jorjol at last resigned himself to the circumstance, and began to exhibit a new set of moods: mocking, self-pitying, sentimental, as surroundings called to mind this or that incident of his childhood. Schaine began to feel a nervous embarrassment; Jorjol was so clearly striking poses. She wanted to tease him and perhaps deflate him a bit, but in doing so she might wound him and perhaps provoke a new and more passionate drama. So she held her tongue. Elvo Glissam, wearing a bland expression, kept the conversation almost foolishly impersonal, and elicited glares of contempt from Jorjol.

Meanwhile Schaine had been

wondering how to announce that lunch was not to be served in the Great Hall. The problem solved itself; as they returned around the house, the buffet table on the eastern lawn was plain to see, and Kelse stood nearby, in conversation not only with Kurgech but with Julio Tanch the head stockman. Both Julio and Kurgech wore Outker garments: twill trousers, boots and a loose white shirt; neither had oiled his skin.

Jorjol stopped short, staring at the three men. Slowly he moved forward. Kelse raised his hand in a polite salute. "Jorjol, you'll remember Kurgech and Julio."

Jorjol gave a curt nod of recognition. "I remember both well. Much water has flowed down Chip-chap River since last we met." He drew himself to his full height. "Changes have occurred. There are more to come."

Kelse's eyes glittered. "We're going to stop assassinations from the Retent. That's one change. You might find the Retent gone and Treaty Lands all along the Alouan. That's another."

Schaine cried out, "Please, let's all eat our lunch."

Jorjol stood rigid. "I do not care to eat out in the open like a servant. I prefer to take my meal in the Great Hall."

"I'm afraid that this is impossible," said Kelse politely. "None of us is dressed for the occasion."

Schaine laid her hand on Jorjol's arm. "Muffin, please don't be difficult. None of us are ser-

vants; we're eating outside by preference."

"This is not the point! I am a man of character and reputation; I am as good as any Outker, and I wish to be treated with dignity!"

Kelse replied in a neutral voice: "When you come here in Outker costume, when you show respect for our institutions and our sensibilities, the situation might change."

"Aha, well then—what of Kurgech and Julio? They meet these standards; take them into the Great Hall and feed them and I will eat alone out here."

"At an appropriate occasion, this might occur, but not today."

"In that case," said Jorjol, "I find that I cannot take lunch with you, and I will now be away and about my business."

"As you wish."

Schaine walked with Jorjol to the Hermes. She spoke in a subdued voice: "I'm sorry that things turned out so badly. But really, Jorjol, you need not have been so irascible."

"Bah! Kelse is an ingrate and a fool. Does he think his great army can frighten me? He will learn one day how things go!" He seized her shoulders. "You are my sweet Schaine. Come with me now! Jump into the sky-boat and we'll leave them all behind."

"Muffin, don't be silly. I wouldn't dream of such a thing."

"One time you did!"

"Long long ago." She drew back as Jorjol attempted to kiss

her. "Muffin, please stop."

Jorjol stood stiff with emotion, gripping her shoulders so tightly that she cringed in pain. A sound: Jorjol looked wildly toward the house, to see Kurgech sauntering forward, apparently lost in thought. Schaine jerked herself free.

Jorjol jumped into the Hermes like a man bereft and shot off into the sky. Schaine and Kurgech watched the aircraft disappear into the west. Schaine turned and looked up into the seamed gray face. "What has come over Jorjol? He's become so wild, so outrageous!" Even as she spoke she recollected that Jorjol had always been wild and outrageous.

Kurgech said: "He smells of doom; he carries disaster on his back as an animal carries its cub."

"Changes are in the air," said Schaine. "I feel them; they press on us all. Tell me: what do the Aos feel? Do they want us to leave Morningswake?"

Kurgech looked south, across the landscape which for thousands of years had been Ao land. "Certain young men have listened to the wittols; they model themselves upon the Gray Prince and call themselves the Vanguard of the Uldra Nation. Others feel that the Alouan is too large to be affected by words. If the Outkers claim the land: well and good; let them do so. The accomodation costs us little and we gain advantages. Then the Vanguard cries out: 'What of the future, when

hundreds of new manses are built, and we are forced out into the desert? This is our land of which we were plundered and we must regain control now! And the other group says: "These hundreds of new manses are not in evidence; is there not enough trouble in the world without anticipating more?" And so the argument goes."

"And what of today, when Jorjol wanted to take his lunch in the Great Hall?"

"Jorgol attempted too much."

"What of yourself? Do you want to sit in the Great Hall?"

"If I were invited I would feel honored to accept. The Great Hall is a sanctuary which no one should violate. Uther Madduc knew the location of our kachembas; many times he could have violated them, but never did so. Had he undergone certain rites, and worn ceremonial clothing, and come in the proper frame of mind, he could have visited any of our sacred places, except those concerned with himself, and then only for his own safety. Certainly he would have lent me Outker garments and taken me into his Great Hall had I asked him to do so."

Schaine pursed her lips dubiously. "Father was a strict man."

"Someday perhaps you will learn the truth."

Schaine was startled. "The truth about what?"

"In due course you will know."

LUNCH WAS SERVED by Wonalduna and Saravan, two of the constantly shifting succession of Ao girls who chose to work a year or two at the great house. The cook at Morningswake was Hermina Lingolet, a second cousin to Kelse and Schaine, who, like Reyona Werlas-Madduc the housekeeper, considered herself a member of the family rather than a servant. For lunch she had prepared a peppery *halash*, or stew in the Ao style, with a garnish of wild parsley, a platter of steamed barley, a salad of fresh herbs from the kitchen garden. Jorjol's going had left a constraint on the company. Only when Elvo Glissam mentioned erjins and their intelligence did the conversation move. Kurgech had anecdotes to tell: of four erjins, communicating telepathically, attempting to trick a party of Somajji outriders into an ambush; of battle between erjins and morphotes; of meeting an erjin face to face on a mountain trail.

So went the lunch. Without perceptible signal Julio and Kurgech simultaneously rose to their feet, expressed polite gratitude and took their leave. Kelse, Elvo Glissam and Schaine remained in the pleasant coolness under the green-gums. Schaine said: "Well, lunch is over and once again Muffin has been barred from the Great Hall. I wonder what's going on in his mind."

"Devil take Muffin, Jorjol, Gray

Prince, whatever he calls himself," declared Kelse irritably. "I wish he'd go back to Olanje and take up residence. He can go to as many Outker parties as he likes."

Elvo Glissam said cautiously: "He's a spirited fellow, to say the least."

"He's insane," growled Kelse. "Megalomania, delusion, hysteria—he's afflicted with everything."

Schaine looked off over the savanna. "What could he mean 'the great army' that you are raising?"

Kelse grinned sourly. "His spies tell him more than we know ourselves. The 'great army' is nothing more than few marks on a paper. Gerd and I have been working on a scheme we'd hoped to keep quiet for at least a few weeks longer."

"I'm not really interested in your secrets."

"It's not really a secret; in fact it's an obvious step we should have taken years ago: political organization. Gerd and I have worked out a tentative charter of federation."

"This is quite an undertaking," said Elvo Glissam. "You two have been busy."

"Someone had to get in motion. We've telephoned all the domains; without exception every one favors political unity. Jorjol naturally has heard the news and assumes that we're organizing for military purposes."

"No doubt true," said Schaine.

Kelse nodded. "We plan to protect ourselves."

Elvo asked tentatively: "What of the Mull? Doesn't it control the Treaty Lands?"

"In theory, yes. In actuality, no. If the Mull minds its own business, we'll mind ours."

Elvo Glissam sat silently. Schaine heaved a mournful sigh. "Everything seems so fragile and uncertain. If only we could feel that Morningswake was truly ours."

"It's ours until we let someone take it away from us. And that's not going to happen."

Chapter 6

SCHAIKE AND ELVO went out riding on a pair of criptids. Kelse insisted that they carry guns and that two of the ranch hands accompany them, to Schaine's annoyance. But as they rode south toward the Skaws she conceded that the precaution was probably well taken. She told Elvo Glissam: "We're not all that far from the Retent and, as you know, wicked things can happen."

"I'm not complaining."

They halted in the shadow of the Great Skaw: a spire of sandstone two hundred feet tall, stratified beige, buff, pink and gray. Morningswake Manor could hardly be seen under the pale green-gums and the darker transtellar oaks. Beyond, the yet

darker line of Fairy Forest lay along the horizon. To the west the Chip-chap wandered back and forth and disappeared into the southwest, eventually to flow into Massacre Lake. "When we were little," said Schaine, "we often came out here on picnics and to look for tourmalines; there's a pegmatite dike over yonder. . . This is where the erjin attacked Kelse, incidentally."

Elvo appraised the surroundings. "Right here?"

"I was over on the pegmatite; Kelse and Muffin were climbing the pinnacle. The erjin came out of that cleft and scrambled up after the boys. It caught Kelse and pulled him down; I heard the noise and ran around to help, but Muffin had shot the erjin, and it was flailing around right where you're standing. Kurgech arrived and tied up Kelse's arm and leg and carried him home, and Muffin became the big hero. For about a week."

"Then what happened?"

"Oh—there was a big quarrel. I flounced off to Tanquil. Then Muffin took himself off to the Rentent and now he's the Gray Prince." Schaine looked around the area. "I guess I don't really like it here after all. . . Poor Kelse."

Elvo looked uneasily over his shoulder. "Do erjins come here often?"

"Once in a while they'll come to look over the cattle, but our Aos are marvelous trackers; they'll follow a trail which you can't even

see. The erjins have learned this and generally they keep to the far wilderness."

Returning to Morningswake Manor, they found Gerd Jemasze's battered old Dacy skyboat on the landing area. Kelse and Gerd were busy in the library and failed to appear until dinner was served in the Great Hall. In accordance with Morningswake custom all had dressed in formal evening wear—Gerd Jemasze and Elvo Glissam in costumes maintained for the use of casual guests. No question, thought Schaine, but what the ritual enhanced the occasion; casual clothes and casual manners would have gone incongruously with the high-backed chairs, the enormous old umberwood table, the chandelier imported from the Zitz Glass Works at Gilhaux on Darybant, and the heirloom dinnerware. Tonight Schaine had taken unusual pains with her appearance. She wore a simple dark green gown, and had piled her hair on top of her head after the fashion of Pharistane water-nymphs, with an emerald starburst at her forehead.

Reyona Werlas-Madduc had already taken her meal with Hermina Lingolet; four persons only sat at the umberwood table in the Great Hall: those four who had shared the march across a hundred miles of wasteland. As they sipped wine, Schaine leaned back and looked at the men through half-closed eyelids, pretending that they were strangers,

so that she might appraise them objectively. Kelse, she thought, looked older than his relatively few years. He could never be a man as imposing as his father. His face was thin and keen; ridges of assertion clamped his mouth. In contrast Elvo Glissam looked easy and light-hearted, without a care in the world. Gerd Jemasze, to Schaine's detached view, looked surprisingly elegant. He turned his head and their glances met. Schaine, as usual, felt a small pulse of antagonism, or challenge, or some other such emotion. Gerd Jemasze dropped his gaze to the goblet of wine; Schaine was both amused and amazed to discover that he had become aware of her presence; through all the years of her life he had ignored her.

"The charter is now circulating around the domains," said Kelse. "If we get general approval, and I believe that we shall, then, ipso facto, we become a political unit."

"What if you don't get general approval?" Schaine asked.

"Unlikely. We've taken up the matter with everyone."

"What if they don't like the structure of your charter and insist on changes?"

"The charter has no structure. It's merely a statement of common cause, an agreement to agree, a pledge to abide by the will of the majority. This is the basic first step which must be taken; then we'll approve a more detailed document."

"So now you must wait. How long?"

"A week or two. Perhaps three."

"Long enough," said Gerd Jemasze, "to discover the humor in Uther Madduc's 'wonderful joke'."

Elvo Glissam was immediately interested. "And how do you do this?"

"Follow his route. Somewhere along the way I'll discover what he considered so funny."

"And what was his route?" asked Schaine.

"From Morningswake he flew three hundred and twelve miles north, seventeen miles northeast—in other words, to the No. 2 Palga Depot. There he landed." Gerd Jemasze brought out Uther Madduc's notebook. "Listen to this: 'No man dares fly the skies above the Palga. Astonishing paradox! The Wind-runners, so meek, so vague, become demons of ferocity at the sight of an aircraft. Out come the ancient light-cannons; the aircraft is exploded into shreds and shards. I put the question to Filisent: 'Why do you shoot sky-craft?'"

"Because," said he, "they are likely to be Blue raiders. 'Oh?' said I. 'When have the Uldra raided last?' 'Not in my memory, nor in my father's memory,' said he. 'Nevertheless that is how things must be; we will have no flyers in our air.' He gave me leave to examine his

cannon: a marvelous implement, and I wonder who had crafted so fine a weapon. Filisent could tell me little. The weapon, with its intricate scrolling and amazing engravements was an heirloom, reached down father to son over years beyond memory; it might well have arrived with that long-forgotten first exploration of Koryphon; who knows?" Gerd Jemasze looked up. "He wrote this, so it appears, a few days after landing at No. 2 Depot. Unfortunately there's not much more. He says: 'The Palga is a most remarkable land and Filisent is a most remarkable fellow. Like all Wind-runners he is a deft and enthusiastic thief unless dissuaded by *fiap* or vigilance. Otherwise he is quite a good chap. He owns a barkentine and thirty-seven separate plots of ground which he cultivates along the passage. How closely these people are meshed with wind and sun, cloud and weather! To see them at the steering-rod, with the sails billowing above them and great wheels trundling, is to see men rapt in a religious rite. And yet, ask them does three twos equal six and they respond with a blank stare. Ask them of erjins, who trains them and how? and the stare becomes a look of bewilderment. Ask them how they pay for their fine wheels and sail-cloth and metal fittings and they gape as if they suspect you to be lacking in reason."

Gerd Jemasze turned a page.

"Here's a section which he calls 'Notes for a treatise':

"Srenki: that amazing and awesome caste, or is it a cult? The knowledge 'comes to the child through recurrent dreams. He becomes pale and thin and troubled, and eventually wanders away from his wagon. Presently he performs his first wanton deed; and thereafter, in this strange placid land, he concentrates within himself and dissipates the elemental turpitude of all the others, who respond to this now-creature of horror with pity and forbearance. The Srenki are few; in all the Palga they number perhaps only twenty; it can be well understood how ghastly and deep within them runs the cloacal seep."

Silence; no one spoke.

Gerd Jemasze turned the page. "Here's about the last of it. He says: 'The man's name is Poliamedes. I have swindled him with Kurgech's trick, and he admits that he has seen the erjin training-center. "Then take me there!" He demurs. I twirl the prism and my voice comes to him from the sky within his brain. "Take me there!"—the voice of a sun-eyed god! Poliamedes accepts the inevitable though he knows he is churning a million destinies into a kind of chaotic soup. "Where and how far?" I ask. "Yonder and at some good distance," is his reply; and so we will see.'" Gerd Jemasze turned a page. "Next a list of numbers I

can't interpret, and that's about all. Except for this last page. First two words: 'Splendor! Marvell' and then: 'Of bittersweet ironies this is the prime. How slow tolls the chime of the centuries! How plangent and sweet is the justice of the tones!' And then a final paragraph: 'The situation is so clear that a demonstration is hardly necessary; still this wonderful demonstration now exists, and if any dare to question our right and our justice, I can and I will pin him to the wall of his own doctrinaire absurdity.' "

Gerd Jemasze closed the notebook and tossed it on the table. "That's all of it. He returned to the Sturdevant. The auto-pilot shows that he flew directly back to Morningswake. Two days later he was dead over the Dramalfo."

Elvo Glissam asked: "I'm puzzled why he went up to the Palga in the first place. To trade?"

"Oddly enough," said Kelse, "on a mission dear to your heart. Last spring he visited Olanje, and took note of Aunt Val's erjins. No one seemed to know how the erjins were trained so Father went up on the Palga to find out."

"And did he find out? Is this his 'wonderful joke'?"

Kelse shrugged. "We don't know."

"The Palga must be a remarkable place."

Schaine said: "I remember all kinds of strange tales—half of them false, no doubt. Babies are

traded between wagons, on the theory that a child raised by its own parents becomes overindulged."

Kelse said, "Remember our old nurse Jamia? She'd scare us silly with bed-time stories about the Srenki."

"I remember Jamia very well," said Schaine. "Once she told us how the Wind-runners hang up their corpses in trees, to keep them safe from the wild dogs, so that when you'd walk through a forest, every tree had a skeleton grinning down at you."

"And not just corpses do they hang up in the trees," said Jemasze. "The ailing old grandparents, it's up the tree with them, to save the trouble of returning to the grove later."

"Charming people," said Elvo Glissam. "So what do you plan to do?"

"I'll fly up to No. 2 Depot and pick up Uther Madduc's trail, by one means or another."

Kelse shook his head. "The trail's too old; you'll never find it."

"I won't, but Kurgech will."

"Kurgech?"

"He wants to come along. He's never been up on the Palga and he wants to see the wind-wagons."

Elvo Glissam said expansively: "I'd like to go along myself, if I could be at all useful."

Schaine clamped her mouth shut; impossible to protest or mention hardship and danger

without embarrassing Elvo, nor could she gracefully point out that Elvo had consumed several goblets of heady amber wine.

Gerd Jemasze's face twitched so slightly that perhaps only Schaine noticed, and her always smouldering dislike of Jemasze flared; again she restrained herself from speaking. Jemasze said politely: "Your company of course is welcome—still we'll be gone for a week or more, perhaps under rough conditions."

Elvo Glissam laughed. "It couldn't be any worse than the trip up from the Dramalfo."

"I hope not."

"Well, I'm not exactly frail, and I have a particular interest in the matter."

Kelse spoke in the most sober of voices, further infuriating Schaine: "Elvo wants to look into

the enslavement of erjins at first hand."

Elvo grinned, showing no embarrassment. "Quite true."

Without enthusiasm Gerd Jemasze said: "I imagine Kelse can fit you out with boots and a few oddments of gear."

"No trouble as to that," said Kelse.

"Very well then; we'll leave tomorrow morning, if I can find Kurgech."

"He'll be up at the old Apple Orchard with his tribe."

For a reckless instant Schaine thought herself to join the venture, then reluctantly put the idea by. It wouldn't be fair to Kelse to fly off to the Palga and leave him alone.

—to be concluded—

—JACK VANCE

Or So You Say (cont. from page 69)

The story confuses me. I keep on thinking that Brunner left clues that he was kidding that I didn't catch on to—I thought it was a joke. What worries me, more than the possibility that Brunner might be a raving bigot that got his views printed, is that *Stone* might make sense to some people. I think I see why some people hanker after the fifties.

By the way, I buy your magazines more for the other things than for the fiction. (*Stone* was an exception. I

had to buy the second issue to find out if he was kidding or not. I'm still not sure.)

DON SCHENK

443 N. Oswego St.

Allentown, Pa. 18103

The point of science fiction is that many viewpoints have validity. It seems to me that you've missed most of Brunner's points, and are unwilling to grant any of them validity—thus matching his "bigotry" with your own.—TW

ON SALE SOON
A BRAND NEW CONAN NOVELET,
SHADOW IN THE SKULL.

Editorial (cont. from page 4)

believe possible—until it happened. It is a harbinger of things to come. *Things to come*. . . Where have I heard that phrase before?

Nor is it the function of my editorials to be “science fiction, or an approximation of it,” any more than that is the function of the letters column, for example. As I view it, this space—perhaps five pages (sometimes more, sometimes less) out of 132—has one primary function, and that is to give me a spot in which I can talk directly to you, this magazine’s readers. Equally, *Or So You Say* is the spot wherein you talk back to me, and to each other. The function of both these “features” is to create *communication* between us, based on our common interest in science fiction and this magazine as a vehicle for science fiction.

But does this mean that I should limit myself to talking solely about science fiction? How many intelligent, insightful editorials could I—or, indeed, anyone—write on that subject?

As I write this I have been the editor of this magazine for about five and one-half years. That means that I have edited a total of sixty-six issues of AMAZING and her sister magazine, FANTASTIC. And that I have written an equal number of editorials.

Now each editor solves the problem of “What do I say *this month*?” in his own fashion. Ray Palmer, whose editorial writings in his own *Other Worlds* in the early 1950’s made a considerable impression upon me, contented himself with mediocre editorials during the more than ten years he edited this magazine. Most of those editorials were puff pieces for the stories to be found in the issue at hand and teases for the stories to come in the next issue.

Subsequent editors of AMAZING contented themselves with even less—when they bothered to run any kind of editorial at all.

Among our present companions in the field, one magazine (*F&SF*) entirely avoids editorials (there were two exceptions, in the mid-sixties—I wrote them both); two (*Galaxy* and *If*) run only an occasional editorial (although their new editor may change that); one (*Vertex*) features a brief piece facing the contents page; and one (*Analog*) features long, thoughtful articles as editorials—and these are usually no more directly concerned with science fiction than are my own.

Obviously, then, there is no “norm,” no standard by which the subject can be measured.

My decision when I began editing this magazine was to write direct, first-person editorial statements, and to avoid the use of the “editorial We,” a first-cousin of the “Royal We”. (When I say “we” I mean *we*—not just myself.) It seemed to me then that a magazine is the focal point of a special community—a community made up of those who produced it (the publisher, editor, artists and authors) and those who read it (you). It also seemed to me, when I was initially formulating these thoughts, that communication within this “community” was breaking down, to the mutual dissatisfaction of all concerned. (For years the authors have been climbing convention platforms to protest—as James Blish did eloquently in Washington in 1963—that they received minimal feedback on their stories. At the same time readers were complaining that they felt ignored by both magazines and authors—expected to pony up the cover price of a magazine or book, and then to remain silent. The

New Wave-Old Wave outburst of the late sixties was symptomatic of this, I feel.) Everyone felt excluded. Magazines had reached a certain nadir in terms of both editorial involvement and reader involvement. (The only exception was John W. Campbell's firmly visible hand at *Analog*.) They might as easily have been produced by machines (and as much as 50% of the copies of a given issue might be consumed by machines—pulp shredders—as well).

So it was my decision to "inject personality" into AMAZING and FANTASTIC. Whose personality? Mine, to begin with—since that was what I had to work with—and yours as well, via a direct feedback process, your letters.

Well, my personality is—like that of most people—complex and many-faceted. I have a number of varied preoccupations and interests, some of which are relevant to this magazine in a broad sense.

Last Fall, as the "energy crisis" began to build, I found my thoughts turning increasingly to both the political and sociological ramifications of the immediate situation. I am a science fiction writer. That means that my mind tends to run in these directions: I extrapolate trends and look for overall patterns. I see the future rooted in today. (Don't we all?)

Thus it seemed to me a legitimate subject to probe here in an editorial. Not as a thoroughly researched article which answered every question implicit in the topic, but as a personal essay (as all of my editorials are) which might ask more questions than it answered, but would surely prompt many of you to consider the situation in a fresh light, or even prompt you to firm up your own opinions—either in agreement with mine or in opposi-

tion to mine, as your inclinations and assessments dictated.

Because I view these editorials—as one-half of a dialogue—with your responses, both positive and negative, as the other half.

Mr. Kerr apparently objects to this basic viewpoint. He is not interested in arguing with me on the points I raised—he simply wants me to stop raising such points entirely. Presumably he would be happiest with a total absence of editorials—and the presence of another short (very short) story.

Unfortunately for him, the salary which he "helps pay" to me is too small for me to edit this magazine without any sense of my own personal involvement in it, without any personal satisfaction gained from it. If in fact I was required to make this magazine a collection of stories *sans* editorials, letters, or other features, I would not continue with it. I have been accused, by my detractors, of bringing too "fannish" an attitude to my magazines—and this I will accept without dispute if "fannish" is defined as "an attitude of joyful involvement by which I gain pleasure from my work."

It astonishes me that Mr. Kerr has enjoyed my books so much while responding so negatively to my editing of these magazines, because I remain the same person, and bring the same attitudes to bear upon both. My biases are implicit in my fiction; they are only somewhat more explicit here.

Perhaps he will find my story in this issue a counterbalance to my editorial presence.

SPEAKING OF SCIENCE FICTION: This issue marks a departure for our *Future in Books* section, which is

usually given over to regular book reviews. On this occasion I have used to space to present an unusual and thought-provoking article by England's Brian Stableford, whose "Science Fiction: A Sociological Perspective" appeared in the March issue of FANTASTIC. That piece drew a good deal of comment, the majority of it quite favorable (see the July issue of FANTASTIC), and it struck me that in recent times FANTASTIC has hogged the majority of the critical essays we've published (starting with the Panshins' *SF in Dimension*) and perhaps it was time to talk about science fiction a little more in the pages of this magazine. (That decision was made, coincidentally, *before* I received Mr. Kerr's letter.) Thus "SF: The Nature of the Medium" replaces our usual book reviews. As an article it is in no way dependant upon Mr. Stableford's previous piece, but if you missed it, copies are available from our Publisher.

Brian Stableford of one of those authors. (Mark Geston is another) who have slipped past many sf magazine readers into a prominence based entirely upon publication in book form. I'm pleased to say that I have a novel and several short stories upcoming (both here and in FANTASTIC) by Mr. Stableford, and I hope to present more of his articles and essays in these magazines as well.

INFLATION: Inflation is all around

us—and at an annual rate greater than any since the end of World War 2—and unfortunately we've had to give up fighting it. With this issue—as you've undoubtedly noticed already if you bought your copy from a newsstand—we've raised our cover price to 75¢ a copy. This was, as I've mentioned in past issues, inevitable. We are in the midst of a paper shortage which has driven the cost of the paper on which we publish this magazine to new heights each month. Printing costs have also risen steadily, and so, in recent times, have shipping costs. (If you recall those striking truckers on the Interstates, give consideration to this thought: our magazines are shipped over the entire country by truck. The lower speed limits and higher fuel costs the truckers have complained about directly affect us—requiring longer times for an issue to reach the stands, and costing us more.)

Thus, sadly but with no remaining alternatives, we've been forced to raise our price and hope that this is a move you'll support. We have also reduced the size of the type for our features in an attempt to regain some recently-lost wordage, and we will continue to try to find and publish the best fiction and non-fiction available. I hope you will all remain with us and continue to give us your support.

—TED WHITE

Life on the Moon (cont. from page 68)

since present conditions on our planet are radically different from those which occurred before life began here. Though we customarily think of the planets as possible

hosts for life, it may be that we finally learn more about the origins of life by studying a small reddish moon, Titan.

—GREGORY BENFORD

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